

Moderator's introduction to the workshop

Europe has been facing the test of various crises since it was impacted by the global financial crisis in 2008. Under the influences of various crises, European integration has encountered a series of problems, and uncertainties in the future direction of integration have increased. On May 5, the European Integration History branch of the Chinese Association for European Studies (CAES) and the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University (PKUIAS), jointly organized an online seminar on the theme “Crisis after Crisis: Problems of European Integration and Their Backgrounds.” Experts and scholars from multiple domestic universities and research institutes conducted in-depth discussions on how the EU and its member states should deal with and resolve various crises, and the development of European integration at different levels, such as politics, economy and society.

Qian Chengdan, director of PKUIAS, and president of the European Integration History branch of CAES, argued that European integration is not a development toward the direction of transcending nation-states, but refers to the interaction between different countries and ethnic groups in Europe. The EU is a “behavior community of nation-states,” which reflects the nature of the EU. In international affairs, the EU provides a platform for consultations among member states, and, through certain mechanisms, to reach a consensus on behavior. However, as far as the current situation in the EU is concerned, all countries can share the blessings, but it is difficult to share the difficulties. As a particular manifestation of this, when Europe

became the “epicenter” of the COVID-19 epidemic in March, the failure of different countries to reach a consensus on a joint response to the epidemic is a typical example, he said.

Shen Yannan, vice-president of the European Integration History branch, research fellow of the Institute of European Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, argued that, after World War II, in establishing the European Community as well as today’s EU, European countries only adopted new ways of cooperation. Their cooperation did not seek to establish a United States of Europe.

The dilemma faced by European integration has been a hot topic among experts and scholars. Feng Zhongping, vice-president of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said that the characteristics of European integration are very complex, which leads to a huge resistance to integration. Such complexity includes three aspects: first, as there are more and more EU member states, the differences among them are increasing; second, populism is on the rise; and third, there is insufficient motivation for development.

Chen Xiaolü, professor of the Department of History, Nanjing University, and vice-president of the European Integration History branch, shared his views on the dilemma of European integration from three aspects: territorial issues, membership definition and how to deal with the complex international situation. He argued that, in an open world, European countries should not maintain a negative attitude, but should actively cooperate with major countries to promote mutual benefit and win-win relations.

Lei Jianfeng, associate professor of the Department of

Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs Management, China Foreign Affairs University, analyzed the challenges faced by European integration from the perspective of the scientific and technological revolution. He argued that the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” has greatly impacted Europe. The pace of Europe clearly cannot keep up with the pace of the revolution in science and technology, which, together with the lack of science and technology, market and labor force, has caused Europe to fall behind rapidly. With the new development in science and technology in the US and some emerging countries, Europe’s disadvantage in the global competition has become more prominent. The weakening of science and technology in Europe has also led to the weakening of cohesion.

Although European integration has encountered unprecedented challenges, experts and scholars are optimistic about the future of European integration. Feng Zhongping proposed three possibilities for the future of the EU. First, a dual Europe will emerge. Some European countries will go further and further on the way of integration, while others may continue to observe and join when integration is in their own interests. Second, there will be voluntary alliances. Different countries will form alliances in different fields according to their different interests. And third, each country may maintain its current development status quo if there are no great changes, which is the likeliest possibility.

Jia Wenhua, professor at the School of Political Science and Public Administration, China University of Political Science and Law, expressed his view that the intensification of conflicts of interest among EU member states in recent years has brought

great setbacks to the integration process, but will not lead to the collapse of integration. The EU needs to make specific analysis based on the situation of the different countries and different problems facing Europe, and gradually solve the problems according to the actual situation and existing capabilities. Countries need to establish a consultation mechanism to strengthen cooperation on the basis of mutual trust, he said.

Xu Lan, professor at the School of History of Capital Normal University and vice-president of the European Integration History branch, said that the pace of globalization has further deepened the development of European integration, so the trend of integration is irreversible. The future trend of European integration depends on the willing transfer of some of their sovereignty by sovereign countries, which is at the root of the tension in European integration. How different countries transfer, what benefits will be transferred, and the degree of acceptance of the transfer will play a key role. Under such circumstances, what the EU needs to pay attention to is how to build a framework that can protect national sovereignty and which is aligned with the interests of the vast number of European countries, she said.

Chen Zhirui, executive editor of *Foreign Affairs Review*, said that European integration has allowed major European countries to become more developed and provided a platform for some small- and medium-sized countries to meet their interests. Therefore, we should not be pessimistic about integration. To the world, a united Europe not only stabilizes world peace, but also has positive significance for world development. However, Europe may be more inclined to take a

realistic path in international affairs in the future. Although cooperation with major powers will not stop, it will be more cautious, Chen said.

Chen Zhiqiang, professor at School of History, Nankai University, and vice-president of the European Integration History branch, said that to get the EU out of the crisis, European countries should not only pay attention to their interests, but also promote their development from a higher level. Germany will play a very key role in the recovery of the EU from the crisis, while France's role will also be very important. In the future, the quality of cooperation between Germany and France will greatly affect the trend of integration, he said.

Zhao Huaipu, director of the European Studies Center, China Foreign Affairs University, expressed his view that European integration will not completely stagnate. Although multiple crises and challenges have dragged down the process of European integration and the development of the EU, the existing strengths of the EU, including some institutional arrangements, as well as a wide range of multi-field common policies and many flexible measures, make it possible that the EU still has material basis, institutional tools and policy means needed to cope with the crises and challenges.

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The workshop was moderated by Liu Zuokui, director of the Central and Eastern Europe Office of the Institute of European Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and deputy secretary general of the European Integration History branch. Prof. Qian Chengdan, president of the European Integration History branch and director of PKUIAS, summarized the nature of EU/European integration in his speech. He pointed out that many statements in the past, including those on the Internet and the propaganda of Europeans themselves, have argued that European integration goes beyond the scope of nation-states, but, in fact, European integration is a way of interacting between nation-states, and the EU is essentially a behavior community of nation-states. When EU countries encounter problems in various affairs, they can negotiate with each other and reach some common behavioral consensus through some mechanisms. However, they are not moving toward the eventual establishment of a “United States of Europe,” as some people think. To draw on an old Chinese saying: “If you are a real family, you should share the difficulties as well as the blessings.” However, the facts during the epidemic have revealed that Europe has still been unable to do this, even when facing a huge disaster such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The clear impression one gets is that they can share the blessings but not the difficulties.

Shen Yannan, vice-president of the European Integration History branch and research fellow of National Strategy Institute, Tsinghua University, expressed his agreement with Prof. Qian Chengdan's definition of European integration. He stressed that when discussing European integration, there must be a clear and scientific definition of it. He argued that European integration is a new way of behavior and a way of cooperation adopted by European countries after World War II. He argued that this is the premise for discussing this issue. From this point of view, he talked about his understandings of the current dilemma of European integration. First is the withdrawal of one of the major core member states (UK), which is unprecedented. Although the two sides are still negotiating, the overall situation has been decided. Second is the further deepening of the European debt crisis, economic crisis, populism and other issues. In fact, the North-South contradiction and the East-West contradiction within Europe have shown clear signs. Some member countries have formed different interest groups, and these countries are united with each other. And third, the international environment around EU has undergone tremendous changes, which is completely different from the initial period after World War II.

In recent decades, as the Soviet Union has disintegrated, European integration has achieved very remarkable economic achievements. Germany has been integrated into the process, but the changes in the original stimulus factors have undoubtedly brought challenges to the next stage of European integration. However, Shen Yannan argued that European integration will continue to develop for three reasons. First, European

integration conforms to the trend of world development, that is, this mode of cooperation conforms to the trend of economic globalization, but its content and form may change. On the one hand, the nature of expansion of capital will not change; on the other hand, the world market has become one, which is difficult to divide, and the industrial chain will not break. Under such circumstances, most countries in the EU cannot act alone on the international stage. They will not be obviously divided, but they may tend to be fragmented and to regroup. This is a development trend. Second, member states have already enjoyed the economic benefits of integration, and they will not change easily. Third, from the former European Community to the present EU, although the EU has experienced a series of crises and conflicts, it still has strong adaptability. Historically, European integration has developed under constant impact and adjustment. As long as the basic concept remains unchanged, it will continue to advance in constant quarrels and negotiations, but it is likely to undergo some changes in various systems and control of power structures.

Finally, Shen Yunnan pointed out that, although the EU is facing many problems during the epidemic and individual member states may have a tendency to act separately in the face of disaster, when considering and judging EU integration, we should consider the benefits and difficulties that European countries will face in their integration. At present, considering the benefits it has gained, the difficulties it faces and the solutions to these difficulties, he argued that EU still needs to maintain cooperation among member states. It will not stagnate

or split, but will evolve under new conditions.

Prof. Chen Zhiqiang, vice-president of the European Integration History Branch and professor of School of History, Nankai University, focused on the way out of the European integration crisis. He expressed his view that, on the whole, European integration has indeed encountered a crisis, which includes not only the epidemic, but also the overall economic downturn and various international crises. As early as 20 years ago, when domestic scholars were generally optimistic about the development of Europe, especially the regional development, he realized that European integration would definitely encounter the problems that have risen today, because, at that time, as long as the issue of sovereignty concessions was involved, the so-called issue of European unification would be immediately challenged and the problems between countries would immediately impact the system. He also agreed with Prof. Qian Chengdan on the definition of European integration, but his definition was even more negative. He argued that it was a “club of the rich” from which everyone could benefit. However, once it was found that the required effort was greater than the benefits, there would be a trend of centrifugation, which has already been manifested in several countries represented by Denmark as well as in Britain this time. Despite the repeated crises, Prof. Chen Zhiqiang’s general view on European integration is still optimistic, and the development of regionalization conforms to the general trend of globalization.

Prof. Chen Zhiqiang expressed his view that, under the circumstances that Britain has exited the EU and countries such

as Italy threaten to exit the EU, the key for the EU to get out of the crisis is Germany's development. Germany has always been the main driver of the EU's three carriages, just like an anchor at sea, and the leader of the whole European integration. If Germany wants to play a good role as the backbone, it not only needs to continue to contribute money and efforts as it does now, but also needs to transfer many interests to other small countries. The future of European integration still needs to consider many factors, such as the extent to which Germany and France will join hands and how long Germany's current stable development will last. Although the goal is very clear, there will be many setbacks in the process. As Mr. Lei Zonghai judged, "It will take 300 years for Europe to achieve unification, and it is still in the first initial stage." Prof. Chen Zhiqiang stressed that the main force at this stage must be Germany. Whether Germany can stabilize, come up with a new European unification plan and maintain this concentration is the key.

Prof. Chen Zhiqiang pointed out that if European unification wants to get out of the current crisis, it needs to get rid of the Anglo-Saxon model in all aspects. Brexit is not a simple issue of interests, but a conflict between the Anglo-Saxon model and the Rhineland Capitalism, which is determined by the special circumstances of Europe. In other words, compared with the first batch of countries that have already grown up, although most European countries are in the second batch, they embody Rhineland Capitalism in economic development and corresponding social aspects. People sometimes regard Europe as monolithic, which is a misunderstanding. Even developed

countries have different development models, and Rhineland Capitalism is an important factor for many European countries to maintain stable development for so many years and have always been in the forefront of Europe. The Anglo-Saxon model is characterized by rough and large development, while the Rhineland Capitalism is precisely a model that exerts small, heavy and condensed collective power. This is indeed a special situation in Europe, because Europe is the only region in the world where so many ethnic, racial and nation-states with equal strength gather in a narrow space, and its conflicts are rare in other parts of the world. Under such circumstances, the great empire model advocated by the Anglo-Saxon model (including that now advocated by the US) does not actually apply to Europe. Therefore, Prof. Chen Zhiqiang argued that whether Germany can really turn Rhineland Capitalism into a trend for Europe's future development is the key point that determines that European integration will finally get out of the crisis.

Chen Xiaolü, vice-president of the European Integration History Branch and professor of the Department of History, Nanjing University, explained the three issues of European integration. First, the scope of Europe. He said that although the scope of Europe seems to be established, it has not been really defined. Seen on the map, Europe is bounded by the Ural Mountains. West of the Ural Mountains is Europe, which includes a large part of Russia. Now when talking about European integration, everyone seems to forget its geographical boundaries. If the so-called Europe excluded Russia, what is Russia's part of its territory within Europe's geographical

boundaries? But if Russia were included in Europe, should European integration also include this part of Russia's territory? If it were included, how is the Asian part to the east of Russia defined? The same thing pertains to Turkey. Does it belong to Europe? Or is it just that part of it close to Europe, not the part east of the Dardanelles Strait? If Europe's geographical location is separated from its countries, how should this Europe be understood? According to Prof. Chen Xiaolü, these issues have not been seriously studied. If there is no clear definition of the scope of Europe, then the preconditions for discussing European integration are doubtful. After the Cold War, the European Union continued to expand to include Eastern Europe, but it never indicated its intention to expand, nor did it say whether it would include Russia. All this made the definition of Europe very vague.

Second, the membership of European integration. He pointed out that any organization should have a precise definition of or restriction on the status of its members. The restriction of European integration on its member states, or what conditions these member states should meet, are all issues worthy of attention. Turkey has repeatedly encountered this problem in the process of applying for membership. Turkey has been denied EU membership, but the EU has not given a clear explanation for the reason. In fact, because Turkey is an Islamic country and has a large population, once it joins the EU, the power structure of the whole European integration will undergo great changes. In addition, Europe's current population is aging rapidly, the indigenous population of all countries is shrinking,

and a large number of immigrants are pouring into Europe. The current Europe is no longer what it used to be. Therefore, the identity of these immigrants needs to be solved urgently. Do they identify with their home country, or with the new European country? Do they identify with Christianity in Europe, or with the religion of their home country? If these issues are not clearly discussed, to talk about European integration in a hurry will only result in chaos.

And third, the original intention of the design of European integration. The original intention of European integration was to establish a buffer zone during the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union to prevent wars within European countries, so the US also did a lot. In order to gain trust, Germany launched the European Coal and Steel Community and made the production process completely public, so that other countries would no longer worry about another war after Germany's rise. It can be said that no matter whether European integration will reach a higher level in the future, its role in preventing the outbreak of war in Europe has been effective, and it is of great significance that it was able to achieve this. However, it has been difficult to realize full economic integration at the same time. We should look at this issue realistically. As long as cooperation is mutually beneficial, there will be win-win results, but the integration must not go too far. This is precisely the problem Europe faces today. Developed Germany wants to become a European city and gradually absorb the industries of other relatively backward countries into the country. This has led Italy, a country which previously had a complete economic

system, to being reduced to relying solely on tourism.

Prof. Xu Lan, vice-president of the European Integration History Branch and professor of the School of History, Capital Normal University, re-examined European integration from the perspective of global history. She pointed out that global history has been a theory and practice popular in the study of world history since the second half of the 20th century, advocating to examine human historical activities from the perspective of the whole world, of which regional integration is a very typical field and European integration is the core region. According to her, the greatest breakthrough in the theory of global history is that it is considered to have subverted Western European centralism, or Western centralism, in theory. In methodology, it advocates horizontal interaction in the development of world history and places more emphasis on space. Generally speaking, it is the equality, interaction and blending between nation-states. Based on this, Prof. Xu Lan provided a triple dimension for analyzing European integration.

First, European integration should be placed in the process of globalization since World War II. In her view, globalization, as a historical process from industrial society to modernization, is the continuous development of global integration. The characteristic of industrial society is that raw materials from all countries in the world can be optimally allocated to each other, and this allocation should be orderly and regular. If countries pursue absolute interests, it will lead to disorder and even war, of which World War II was an example. After World War II, due to the establishment of the international political order and the

international economic order, the development of globalization was relatively orderly, and the leading force promoting globalization gradually became large multinational companies, which deepened globalization. European integration and globalization are developing simultaneously, and the European Coal and Steel Community is a large multinational company. Therefore, this deepening process is irreversible, not only in the economy, but also in politics, science and technology, culture and other aspects. It can be seen that the general trend of European integration is irreversible.

Second, European integration should be placed in the space of the whole of Europe, and the whole of Europe should be taken as the platform for European integration process. This platform is expanding and is gradually covering most of the space of Europe. Despite Brexit, European integration has been advancing in twists and turns, even during the Cold War period. In this space, countries are geographically close or even connected, and their cultural histories are also very similar. The interests between countries are very big. It is not easy for European countries to go back.

And third, the equality, interaction and blending among all European nation-states are the main research objects in the process of European integration. This issue is the most important, because in the process of European integration, nation-states have been interacting and blending, but what is worth thinking about is whether this interaction is truly equal, whether this interaction is sufficient, and whether it has brought about blending in all aspects. Globalization urges every nation-state to

give up some of its sovereignty properly in order to obtain due returns, while European integration also involves the protection and concession of nation-state sovereignty, which will lead to contradictions. The deepening of integration requires a deep concession of the sovereignty of various countries, but many countries have strengthened the protection of sovereignty and in some countries, populism is rampant. The tension between the nation-state and integration lies in the extent to which the sovereignty transfer of the nation-state can maximize its own interests and also the interests of the whole region in the process of globalization. This problem has always troubled the nation-state.

Judged from the long period of globalization, the development of integration in various countries has always been unbalanced. In other words, the richer the country, the more it wants to promote globalization and the more profits it will make. Today, developed countries, such as Britain, do not want to undertake obligations for the relatively backward countries in the EU, and the relatively backward countries are unable to save themselves, so integration has encountered bottlenecks. The key issue is how integration can deepen the development of the country while solving the problem of protecting the sovereignty of that nation-state. The development of European integration has always followed several principles: to overcome extreme nationalism; to seek compromise from different institutions at all levels and find the combination point of national sovereignty and supranational integration; and to implement flexible and gradual progress and exclude mandatory integration. These are

not only the characteristics of integration, but also the important reasons for the persistent development of European integration. At present, these basic principles should also be followed to solve the bottleneck of European integration.

Feng Zhongping, research fellow and vice-president of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, explained the reasons for the difficulties in European integration and the future of European integration. He pointed out that European integration has always been a regional experiment. Europeans have been measuring how much sovereignty they want to give up and how much benefits they can get. The process is getting more and more complicated. Its attempts of more than 70 years are of great significance to the rest of the world. Although some people think that integration has suffered setbacks, its fundamental significance lies in returning to the question of how a nation-state can better defend its own interests. For the sake of peace and development, nation-states need in-depth cooperation, for which they may even need to share some sovereignty. Under the background that globalization has reached another crossroads, European integration is facing more complicated situations and greater resistance for three reasons. First, with the number of member countries increasing, their differences in interests, politics, culture, geography and religion make it difficult to cooperate, even at the functional level. Many people in Europe do not think that they will reach the stage of political union because there is too much resistance, and self-interest is of first priority. After the outbreak of the epidemic, there was a great contradiction between economically

developed Northern Europe and less developed Southern Europe. Northern Europe was unwilling to fully rescue Southern Europe, while Southern Europe felt that Northern Europe should. It should be noted that after the eastward expansion of the EU, European integration has not made much progress, because the interest gap between so many countries is so large.

Second, the rise of populism is the biggest enemy of European integration. Populism not only does not allow the continued transfer of sovereignty, but also seeks to recover the sovereignty transferred in the past. Its rise is due to the 2008 financial crisis, the 2010 European debt crisis and the particularly critical refugee crisis, which has highlighted the issue of identity. The economic, social and political crises arising from the epidemic are likely to further stimulate populism in Europe.

And third, the current development momentum of European integration is insufficient. The initial motivation was for peace, for peaceful coexistence between Germany and France, and then for maintaining competition with the US and several major Asian economies. The initial motivation was presumably sufficient. However, while the current motivation is all right if European integration maintains the status quo, it needs new impetus if it wants to continue to make progress. At present, new impetus is brewing, and no comprehensive consensus has been formed. The emerging consensus is the confrontation between China and the US—that is, where Europe should stand and how it should protect its own interests in the event of a new bipolar pattern. This is likely to form a new

impetus to promote the new development of integration. At present, many important strategic reports in Europe have begun to talk about “strategic autonomy,” and a very important part of this is to further unite. Otherwise, there will be new problems, such as how to be independent and how to compete with China and the US. However, under the new circumstances, no new impetus has really formed.

Regarding the prospect of European integration, Feng Zhongping proposed three possibilities. The first is “dual-mode Europe” — that is, some countries will go forward first and other countries will wait, but it is unknown how long they will wait. This model will not be publicized in a high profile, because it will inevitably lead to the distinction between core countries and peripheral countries and lead to internal division (in fact, related situations have already occurred, such as the issue of defense integration). The second is the “volunteer alliance” — that is, smaller countries and big countries, such as Germany and France, have common wishes and common interests in a certain field; therefore, they can be expected to move toward an alliance. Its aim would be to realize European cooperation and safeguard European interests to compete with China and the US. And the third is to stay where it is and maintain the status quo. With the development of European integration so far, it may be difficult to back up, but it is even more difficult to give up the results of the existing cooperation.

Prof. Jia Wenhua from the School of Political Science and Public Administration, China University of Political Science and Law, focused his talk on whether the EU would collapse and

shared many relevant polling data. He mentioned that in the past, the question of whether the EU would collapse was generally not considered a problem because the benefits of entering the EU were far greater than those of staying outside, and the cost of exiting was far higher than the expected cost of joining or staying in it. However, Brexit has taken place, and various information and data in the past two years also reflect this trend. The first is the election of the European Parliament. The overall control by the mainstream party groups, people's party groups and socialist party groups is declining. The number of seats controlled by populist parties has clearly increased. In addition, European polls show that the proportion of people who have negative views of the EU is also on the rise. For example, the most striking poll last year was conducted by the European Council on Foreign Relations in 14 countries. The results showed that more than half of the respondents in all countries except Spain believed that the EU would collapse within the next 10 or 20 years. There was also a particularly surprising perception in this poll, which was that some people, especially young people, believed that war between member countries was no longer completely beyond imagination.

In order to further explore this phenomenon, Prof. Jia Wenhua's team made preliminary statistics on the data of several major European polls. In the 2019 Eurobarometer poll, the proportion of people who held negative attitudes toward the EU had increased a lot from that of 2018, reaching about 40 percent. This means that, although it would be difficult for the EU as a whole to collapse, some arrangements that do not conform to the

interests of the people or the state are likely to slowly shrink back. Previous polls have both supporters and opponents, but there is a large area in the middle, thus maintaining the balance between the two or three parties. What is troublesome now is that the middle zone is gradually losing, no longer separating the two sides, but moving closer to the negative side. However, based on all kinds of poll data, there is still a positive trend on the whole. For example, in the latest report of the European Social Survey, the proportion of voters of mainstream political parties who advocate leaving Europe is less than 14 percent, and the proportion of voters who do not advocate leaving the EU is 86 percent, while the proportion of voters of populist parties who advocate leaving the EU is 31.07 percent and that of those who advocate staying in the EU is 68.93 percent. This shows that the situation is not as expected, that is, those who support populist parties advocate leaving the EU, or almost all populist parties are Eurosceptical. Taken together, 81.2 percent of the interviewees advocated staying in Europe and 18.8 percent advocated leaving Europe.

According to Prof. Jia Wenhua, on the whole, the EU is not in a crisis of imminent collapse, but it will take at least ten years or more if it wants to make great strides. What is even more worrying is whether the functions of the EU will disintegrate, that is, whether any member states will withdraw from the scope of cooperation that has been formed so far, thus making these areas of cooperation exist in name only. This is because further analysis of the polls shows that what those who advocate leaving Europe are most dissatisfied with is not the perception

of integration itself, but specific issues such as refugee issues, immigration issues, and the institutional bureaucracy represented by the European Parliament. Therefore, from this perspective, the EU does need to carry out reforms.

Prof. Chen Zhirui with China Foreign Affairs University discussed his ideas about European integration from four aspects, namely, the concept of “integration,” the enhancement and reality of European integration, the epidemic crisis in Europe and the new direction of “European studies.” According to him, in the context of China, the term “integration” represents the direction of continuous unification, because China has a unified political and cultural tradition, but “integration” should be understood as the concept of “combination.” Integration does not mean that member countries must march to a higher and more thorough degree, but means that the countries integrate internal stimulus and external relations according to the needs of different periods, the needs of national interests, and the needs of the internal and external interests of Europe as a whole.

Prof. Chen Zhirui pointed out that, on the one hand, we still have some ideals about European integration or European combination. European integration mainly has two purposes: one is to achieve long-term peace, and the other is to achieve European self-improvement, both of which are basically realized today. Without European integration, it is hard to imagine what Europe would be like today, and Germany’s ambition would be probably far more than that. European integration provides a platform, a framework, a regulation and restriction, which are all worthy of attention. Therefore, we should keep a cautious and

optimistic attitude toward the current situation of integration. On the other hand, on practical issues, European strategic autonomy or the emergence of European barriers will be an inevitable development trend, and China will face a more difficult and realistic Europe in the future.

Prof. Chen Zhirui raised a thought-provoking question: Is the epidemic a new crisis for Europe? There have been three crises in the process of European integration, namely, a constitutional crisis, financial crisis and refugee crisis, which correspond to the three dimensions of politics, economy and society. At present, there are many debates at home and abroad on whether epidemic prevention and control will lead to geopolitics or power transfer. According to him, although the epidemic will aggravate the pressure in many aspects of Europe, these pressures are also being faced by China, the US, Africa and other countries or areas. Therefore, further calm and detailed observation and analysis are needed. It is unreasonable to simply judge whether the epidemic prevention and control work of a country or area is well done or whether there is something wrong with its system just by the number of confirmed cases or the number of deaths. For example, Italy has seen a high fatality rate, which is closely related to its family structure, population structure, European cultural tradition, social style, etc.

Finally, Prof. Chen Zhirui introduced three new directions for “European studies.” First, researchers should strengthen historical research, such as restudying the relationship between Britain and Europe, and the evolution of European territory in

various dimensions, not only in geopolitical and legal dimensions, but also in cultural, psychological and emotional dimensions. Second, research should attach importance to the perspective of international relations and pay attention to the changes in the internal and external environment of European integration. For example, researchers can think about whether its motivation comes from external pressure or the need for internal autonomy. In addition, the issue of regionalization and fragmentation of European integration also deserves attention. And third, interdisciplinary research should be advocated. In the past, the academic community studied European integration as a special form, but now it is necessary to deconstruct and restore it, and to carry out research of Europe on political, economic, social, cultural and other levels in different disciplinary fields, so as to broaden the horizon of European research and the fields of research problems.

Prof. Zhao Huaipu, director of the European Studies Center of China Foreign Affairs University, shared his views on the current situation of European integration and his understanding of European defense cooperation in recent years. As far as the current situation in Europe is concerned, on the one hand, European integration has been plagued and impacted by a series of internal and external crises, including the debt crisis, economic crisis, terrorist attacks, Ukrainian crisis, refugee crisis and the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis. All these crises have one thing in common, that is, they are complex and persistent. It has been difficult to find effective solutions in the short term. This may cause the EU to fall into internal reflection and

adjustment for a long period of time, including reforming relevant systems and mechanisms and adjusting various complicated relationships, so as to maintain the efficiency of EU unity and European integration. At the same time, the external European grand strategy may become more inward, and the power of international action will inevitably decline. On the other hand, European integration will not completely stagnate, and the EU will not collapse under the impact of the crisis. The existing strengths of the EU, including some institutional arrangements, as well as a wide range of multi-field common policies and many flexible measures, make it possible that the EU still has material basis, institutional tools and policy means needed to cope with the crises and challenges. Therefore, on the whole, the pace of European integration will slow down, and the EU's strategies and policies will tend to be more inward, but EU will not be in a state of inertia. It will even make progress in some fields to maintain the momentum of European integration, maintain the international status and influence of EU, and safeguard the legitimacy of its existence.

Prof. Zhao Huaiyu has been paying much attention to the EU defense cooperation. He mentioned that "Permanent Structured Cooperation" (PESCO) is the only substantive military cooperation initiative in the Lisbon Treaty. PESCO was officially launched at the end of 2017, which means that the common defense construction of EU has become a hot spot in European integration in recent years and has attracted much international attention.

On the one hand, PESCO, as a strategic measure taken by

the EU in the field of defense, aims internally to enhance the overall defense capability of the EU by integrating the military resources of its member states, so as to effectively protect the EU's own strategic interests and promote the EU's defense integration; externally, it aims to strive for more independence and strategic autonomy for the EU. Endogenous power and external pressure together constitute the fundamental basis for its sustainable development. Since PESCO was launched, the number of cooperation projects has increased from 13 at its beginning to 47 currently, and has made some positive progress and shown the potential for further development in the future.

On the other hand, PESCO also has limitations and some problems. First, most of the cooperation projects started belong to "soft military" projects that mainly focus on joint training and technology research and development, and are far from enough to substantially improve their combat capability. This has relatively limited positive influence on the EU to enhance its comprehensive military power and strategic autonomy. And second, although PESCO emphasizes the binding force of the degree of cooperation, it still leaves more room for flexibility for member countries participating in the cooperation. Specifically, member countries can decide what cooperation projects to participate according to their own capabilities and wishes, which has led to the fact that the number of countries participating in each project is very limited, with only three to seven countries participating in all 47 projects. Correspondingly, the participating countries are scattered and unevenly distributed. Most of the participating projects are basically Western

European countries, such as France, Germany, Spain and Italy, while those European countries that have traditionally been less willing to cooperate in EU defense are continue to be less involved in these projects. This situation will obviously restrict the ability of PESCO to form scale effect on existing defense resources, and its flexibility may seriously affect the efficiency of decision-making under the condition of serious disputes over multiple interests of member countries. As a result, at present, only a limited number of participating countries have carried out limited cooperation in some relatively marginalized areas, and there is a lack of overall planning and centralized leadership. Prof. Zhao Huaipu expressed his view that if this defense capability is to be transformed into an outward military capability that the EU can use and put into action, greater difficulties need to be overcome. This depends on whether member countries can form more consensus on central strategic cultures, such as when, where and how to use defense capabilities. At present, the number of such cooperation projects involving coordination of defense operational capabilities of member countries is still relatively small.

The external influence factors or external resistance toward PESCO mainly come from NATO and the US. The US still needs to maintain its troops in Europe and its political and economic control over Europe through NATO, and hopes to press European countries to increase military spending to purchase more US weapons. However, many European countries have their own ideas. For example, French President Macron has made it clear that the increase in military spending is to establish

an independent European military spending, not to purchase US arms. The contradiction between the EU, the US and NATO has thus been highlighted. NATO and the US are wary of PESCO. They warned the EU that PESCO should strengthen European military capability under the NATO framework, instead of competing with NATO or establishing a substitute for NATO. It can be seen that the move of the EU to improve its defense capability will inevitably be blocked by NATO, and the EU will not dare to directly challenge NATO.

Jiang Nan, research fellow at the Institute of World History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, focused on the differences in the response of European countries to the epidemic and their pride in their national culture. She pointed out that the national personalities of the major European countries under the epidemic situation are very different, and the policies and methods of the government and the public in dealing with the epidemic have also been very different. In Germany, when the government initially banned gatherings of more than 1,000 people, the Germans held parties attended by 999 people each. This forced the Merkel government to redefine the severity of the epidemic, stressing to the public that the COVID-19 epidemic is worse than any challenge Germany had ever faced since World War II, detailing the research results of scientists, and explaining why the government should adopt such an anti-epidemic policy, and the importance to every family of maintaining social distancing, etc. In Britain, Johnson's chief scientific adviser initially proposed a policy of herd immunity, saying that 39.6 million of the 66.66 million people in Britain

would become infected with the virus. Calculated at the lowest mortality rate, about 1.18 million Britons would die of the epidemic, in exchange for herd immunity for all Britons. Johnson not only refused to advise the British to self-isolate in their homes at his press conference, but, on the contrary, encouraged people to go out and try to get infected with COVID-19. He said that 80 percent of the infected people were patients with mild symptoms and were not in any danger of losing their lives. They would have antibodies after their recovery, he said. Johnson also said that the British government would only test patients with severe symptoms, and patients with mild symptoms should self-isolate at home for seven days unless their condition deteriorated. Interestingly, on the second day of the press conference, the originally prosperous and crowded city of London became deserted overnight, and the British people stayed at home obediently. In addition, the situations in France, Italy and Spain also had their own characteristics. At first, they did not take COVID-19 seriously. The people in those countries are romantic and love freedom by nature, so it was difficult for them to isolate at home, Jiang Nan said.

According to Jiang Nan, these differences reflect the different economic and political ideas of European countries and the different ruling styles of their governments. For example, Macron said that the French welfare system, especially its free medical care system for all, was a very valuable asset and would be an essential advantage for France. Moreover, the global pandemic shows that certain properties and services must be

placed outside the laws of the market, he said. Germany, on the other hand, has been more rational and calm in the epidemic because of its strong economic strength, its emphasis on scientific rigor and discipline, and its possession of the strongest medical system in Europe. In contrast, because Britain is the birthplace of modern democracy, the public does not always listen to the government, so the prime minister did not take coercive measures, but used the “herd immunity theory” to encourage the British to isolate themselves, Jiang Nan said.

Regarding the national cultural pride of European countries, Jiang Nan pointed out that cultural integration is a sensitive topic. According to Jiang, the French will not think that cultural integration means the disappearance of the French language. The British have a sense of superiority over their gentlemanly demeanor and democratic system. Nordic people are proud of their tax and welfare policies. All these show that, in terms of language, culture and development mode, all nation-states have great pride in and determination to protect their own language, which road to choose, political system, economic mode, welfare mode, etc. As for the epidemic, from the perspective of the entire EU, member states first considered their own national interests, such as closing borders and intercepting epidemic prevention materials. It was not until April that EU commission chief Ursula von der Leyen publicly apologized to Italy, expressing his regret that EU member states had their own policies in the initial stage of the epidemic, and promising that the EU would unite and work together to allocate medical resources and reach an agreement on economic aid.

Lei Jianfeng, associate professor of the Department of Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs Management, China Foreign Affairs University, gave a presentation titled “Scientific and Technological Revolution and European Integration,” which mainly involved two aspects: first, the reasons why European integration has encountered challenges in recent years; and second, the future development direction of Europe. He expressed his view that the root cause of the crisis in European integration was that Europe’s scientific and technological advantages have become weaker and weaker since World War II, resulting in weaker cohesion and centripetal force in European integration. Although World War II reduced many parts of Europe to ruins, Europe’s leading position in scientific and technological strength was not greatly affected. Germany and France had strong organizational capabilities, and their scientific and technological advantages were maintained until the last decade of the 20th century. In addition, when facing the challenges of Japan and the US in the 1970s, Europe launched a unified large market, greatly reducing the problem of narrow European markets and giving full play to the comparative advantages of various countries. Marxist theory can be used to analyze the current situation of Europe. The theory goes as follows: Mutual relations among various ethnic groups depend on the development degree of productivity, division of labor and internal communication within each ethnic group. They depend not only on the relationship between a certain ethnic group and another ethnic group, but also on the ethnic group’s own internal structure, its own production capacity and its degree of

communication with the outside world. The most obvious manifestation of the development level of the productive forces of an ethnic group lies in the development level of its division of labor. Any new productivity, as long as it is not a simple expansion of the existing productivity, will affect the further development of the division of labor. Therefore, if the strength of science and technology is strong, productive forces will develop, and if productive forces develop, the centripetal force will increase.

When the EU is relatively powerful in economy and science and technology, the confidence of Europeans, the confidence of core EU countries and the confidence of countries willing to join the EU will also greatly increase, and the soft power of European integration will be relatively strong. For example, Article 1 of the *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe* states that the purpose of European integration is to secure, support and expand the values of the EU. However, since the beginning of the 21st century, especially since the fourth industrial revolution, the confidence of the EU has gradually decreased. The reason is that the EU's investment in science and technology has decreased, the market is generally narrow, and there is a lack of a high-quality labor force. These factors have greatly affected the basic scientific and technological strength on which the EU's economic development depends. According to specific data on the science and technology investment of the world in 2016, the investment of the US was 511.1 billion US dollars; the EU, 392 billion; and China, 451.2 billion. Therefore,

as the EU is getting weaker and weaker in the scientific and technological revolution, it is normal for its cohesion to weaken.

As for the future of European integration, Lei Jianfeng argued that although European integration has the characteristics of nationalism and federalism, the common ground of both is pragmatism. Therefore, the criterion for judging European integration should be what problems it has solved, not how much it has expanded and whether it has encountered setbacks. Although European integration has encountered great challenges, that Brexit happened is, after all, very accidental. People cannot regard accidental events as inevitable and explain them according to the logic that they are inevitable. To sum up, the political, economic and security basis for the initial development of European integration still exists: big countries such as France and Germany need the EU to maintain their status as a big country, and a unified large market is good for all European countries. EU countries will jointly meet Russia's challenges. Therefore, European integration will continue to develop, but the EU's international status will become weaker and weaker.

During the discussion session, the participants exchanged views on issues such as the tension between nation-states and integration, the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic to China-EU relations, and the background of Sino-US confrontation in European integration.

Prof. Chen Zhiqiang expressed his view that the epidemic has impacted not only Europe, but also the whole world. After this major event, the world is bound to change. However, as we are still in the middle of the event, we do not have a clear

understanding of many things and cannot see the result. Our judgment on the future is mostly speculation. On the whole, although European integration will encounter many setbacks, it will still move forward, and the ultimate goal will be bright. Europe is a typical representative of regionalization, and it has shown a momentum toward gradually extricating itself from the control of the US. With the background of the Sino-US confrontation, Europe in the future will no longer be able to maintain the Cold War mentality of “choosing sides” of the past and will definitely have to make adjustments. However, it will still take a long time to resolve the current crisis. On the other hand, we should also realize that the form of the nation-state will be strengthened due to the influence of interests. There will be no results of negotiation in a short period of time as to what extent sovereignty will be transferred. However, Germany’s economic development will be an important step toward European independence in the future, because Germany’s economy is not as virtualized and hollowed out as that of the US, which is also an important field in which Germany can establish good cooperation with China.

Feng Zhongping pointed out that China’s rise is the representative event of economic globalization since the end of World War II, so many people today think it is de-sinicization when talking about de-globalization. China’s rise is a story of success for the Chinese, but it is an event that needs to be taken seriously for many countries in the world. Europe, the US, developing countries, Asia, Africa and Latin America and China’s neighboring countries all have different feelings about

China's rise and have different coping strategies. All circles in China should attach importance to these different attitudes. The attitude of the US has become clear. The core consensus of the Democratic and Republican parties is that it cannot allow China to surpass or even replace the US. Not only the Trump administration, but also the post-Trump era administration will work to prevent China's development. As for Europe, they have been thinking for a long time about the issue of China's rise and are in a dilemma. Finally, the Europeans gave their answer on March 12, 2019, when they said they should cooperate with China when necessary, compete with China when necessary, and confront China when necessary. Obviously, Europe's view on China's rise is more realistic, comprehensive, less emotional and more rational. It can cooperate with China on climate change, Iran's nuclear issue and new energy security issues, compete in high-tech fields, and confront China in institutional governance. However, as Macron said, only if Europe is further united can Europe find its autonomy.

Kong Tianping pointed out that, in addition to the various crises mentioned above, special care should also be given to the crises created by the Central and Eastern European countries themselves. That is, since 2010, Hungary and Poland have successively embarked on the road to "illiberal democracy," abolishing, balancing and shaking their legal systems through legal means. At present, the EU has not found an effective response to this crisis, which is likely to become a long-term challenge. For example, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic in Europe, the Hungarian parliament passed a law to

ensure the power to govern by decree. Poland was to hold a presidential election on May 10 and pass a law in the House of Representatives stipulating that the postal department and the Ministry of State-owned Assets organize a correspondence vote, completely abandoning the Election Committee. As of May 5, the Senate had not yet passed it. Kong Tianping said he did not agree to define this phenomenon as “illiberal democracy,” but would prefer to call it new authoritarianism or soft authoritarianism. What impact it will have on European integration still needs continuous observation.

At the conclusion of the workshop, Prof. Qian Chengdan said that the process of European integration has always been a hot topic in European studies in China. With the background of the global spread of COVID-19, it is of far-reaching academic and practical significance how European countries will deal with the epidemic and where Europe will go in the future. Per Prof. Qian, the discussion provided a very valuable point of view and reference for understanding the above-mentioned problems. In the future, European integration needs to be studied from different angles. Only by analyzing different states in different periods can we have different opinions and different evaluations, he said.