

## Preamble

A COVID-19 epidemic has been raging throughout the world since early 2020. Countries have taken various kinds of prevention and control measures in response to the challenges to public health, the economy, society, and international relations brought about by this rare pandemic. In order to obtain a clear view of different countries' principles and mechanisms in combating the epidemic as well as the impact of such measures on the present state of the world, the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University (PKUIAS), in coordination with and PKU's Office of International Relations, held an online seminar as part of its Broadyard Workshop (博雅工作坊) series, titled "The Global Epidemic: Observations and Analysis by Diplomats."

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Macron administration has taken a series of countermeasures, including closing schools, stopping all non-essential commercial activities, strictly limiting overseas exchanges, and imposing stay-at-home orders. The government promised to postpone or reduce taxes and social security contributions, allocated 45 billion euros (\$50.2 billion) in immediate aid for businesses and employees, and declared a national "public health emergency." Under these united efforts, the epidemic in France has shown signs of relief. But still, some French are concerned about the future. On the one hand, whether the French measures can effectively curb the virus remains unknown. On the other hand, the French economy is undergoing its worst quarterly performance since 1945, and tiding over the crisis as soon as possible has become the primary problem facing the French government.

Compared with other countries, what are the gains and losses of French anti-pandemic measures? What role do its measures play in the whole European anti-pandemic battlefield? How has the pandemic impacted the stability and security of Sino-French industrial chain cooperation? What attitude and measures should China take to face this impact? What changes will the pandemic bring to the current state of development in Europe, or the world? This workshop features four scholars and experts — former Chinese Ambassador to France Zhai Jun; Chair of the Department of French at PKU's School of Foreign Languages Dong Qiang; Prof. Yang Zhuang from PKU's National School of Development; and Director of the Department of Global Health in PKU's School of Public Health Zheng Zhijie — who will discuss the aforementioned issues from multiple perspectives.

**The 31st Broadyard Workshop**  
**The Global Epidemic: Observations and Analysis by**  
**Diplomats (III): France**  
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The workshop was moderated by Director of the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University (PKUIAS) Qian Chengdan. Zhai Jun, the former Chinese ambassador to France and concurrently Chinese ambassador to Monaco, who is now China's special envoy on Middle East affairs, made the keynote speech.

Zhai Jun summarized the situation of the pandemic in France. Like most countries, the pandemic in France underwent two phases. The first phase was between late January and late February. On January 24, the French government announced three imported cases of COVID-19, marking the official beginning of the epidemic in France. Previously, France had had formulated a “four-phase epidemic prevention plan.” The first phase is prevention against imported cases; the second phase is containing the spread of the virus; the third phase focuses on minimizing losses; and the fourth phase is the post-epidemic phase.

During the first phase, France believed the virus had not spread in the country, and thus focused on the prevention of imported cases. It strengthened the early warning mechanisms in its medical system, making it possible to track the chain of infection the minute a case was detected. Air France gradually suspended its flights to and from China from January 22, and imposed strict isolation and quarantine on nationals evacuated from Wuhan to reduce the potential risk of importing infections.

The above measures achieved good results. As of February 24, there were only 12 confirmed cases in France, of which one died. The epidemic did not rage across the country.

The second phase started from February 21. On February 26, the Oise department, 100 kilometers north of Paris, saw France's first local death, which was followed by cluster infections in this region. Later, Haute-Savoie, bordering Italy and Switzerland, and Haut-Rhin, bordering Germany and Switzerland, also experienced clusters of infections. On February 29, the total number of confirmed cases in France exceeded 100. The government announced that the epidemic had entered the second phase, that is, the virus began to spread in the country, but not yet widely. At this phase, the French government's epidemic prevention strategy was to delay and contain the spread of the epidemic, with the medical system still trying its best to trace the chain of infection as well as conducting nucleic acid testing. Since then, the epidemic in France has generally shown a development trend from east to west.

On March 11, the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic. On March 12, the total number of confirmed cases in France was 2,876, including 129 severe cases and 61 deaths. French President Emmanuel Macron delivered a national speech that night, saying that this epidemic was the most serious crisis facing France over the past century. He stressed that France was still in the early stage of the epidemic and announced some related measures to deal with the epidemic. Schools were closed nationwide from March 16. Hospitals postponed some elective operations or treatments to save beds for critically ill patients.

The government mobilized all possible medical forces, including retired doctors and medical students.

The number of infected cases in France amounted to 4,500 on March 14, doubling within 72 hours. The same night, the then Prime Minister Edouard Philippe declared in a televised speech that from midnight, all non-essential public places across the country, such as restaurants, cafes, cinemas and dance halls, would be closed. However, the first round of voting in municipal elections would be held as scheduled. Subsequently, Director General of Health Jerome Salomon stated that the epidemic had actually entered the third phase.

During the third phase, the pandemic started to spread nationwide. The French strategy shifted from delaying and containing the virus to reducing losses. It was no longer possible to track the chain of infections or detect all the cases. The government tried to weaken people-to-people contact through social management and control measures. Hospitals only accepted severe cases, with mild cases staying at home for close self-monitoring. When those at home had difficulty breathing, they would call an emergency number and be accepted after an evaluation by the hospital.

On March 16, Macron made another televised speech, declaring an at least 15-day stay-at-home order starting from the next day, a postponement of the second round of municipal elections due on March 22, and that face masks should firstly be supplied to medical staff at hospitals. Meanwhile, the EU and the Schengen area also declared the close of ports of entry.

The pandemic in France kept spreading in France in spite of the stay-at-home order. As of March 19, the confirmed

number of cases in France were more than 10,000, and 372 people died. By April 1, the number of confirmed cases mounted to 57,000 and over 4,000 people died in hospitals. France started to release statistics from nursing homes and other welfare institutions after April 2, and the number of confirmed and suspicious cases from them that day was about 15,000, with almost 900 dead. The number of severe cases in France started to come down after April 9, indicating the pandemic had eased. But the French epidemic was still serious. As of the evening of April 26, the statistics released by the French Ministry of Health indicated a total of 124,575 confirmed cases and 22,856 deaths.

Zhai expressed his belief that in practice, French measures seemed to lag behind the development of the pandemic, and had some gaps. This was manifested in four aspects.

First, France was blindly confident. France is a traditional strong power in the health field, ranking 11th on the 2019 Global Health Security Index. Its average life expectancy is also among the highest in the world, and France was also considered to be one of the countries most prepared to deal with epidemics. The French government initially believed that COVID-19 was only something happened far away, on the other side of the earth. When preventing imported cases, France only targeted Asia, especially China, but not its neighboring countries. The French government was confident of its medical level and scientific research level, but underestimated the role of social management and control measures, which resulted in local people's lack of vigilance. France did not realize its insufficient reserve of prevention and control materials until the outbreak of the epidemic. The reserve of face masks in France once

exceeded 1 billion. But due to various reasons such as budget reductions, there were only 150 million surgical masks left and no medical protective masks available when the epidemic broke out. Due to a serious shortage of production capacity, there are only four mask manufacturers in France, which can produce up to 3.3 million face masks per week. However, medical staff alone needed 24 million masks every week. In addition, France's testing reagents, breaching machines, and intensive care beds were also severely insufficient. On the whole, the French government was in a state of confused haste after the outbreak, "fighting the fire while looking for water."

Second, the French government was overcautious and indecisive. It thought too much after the outbreak of the virus and missed the best time for fighting it. The municipal elections, a big issue in the country, happened during the spread of the virus. The first round of voting was on March 15. President Macron stressed in a high-profile manner that democratic life should go on. The ruling party and the opposition parties were all striving for votes. On March 15, more than 20 million French people took to the streets to vote. The next day Macron had to announce the stay-at-home order, which triggered a huge controversy.

The lagging anti-pandemic measures by the government were also due to economic factors. The French economy had been on the decline for the second year in a row in 2019. The economic growth rate was down to 1.3 percent and the unemployment rate was as high as 8.1 percent. Prevention and control measures, including the shutdown of factories and a halt in production, had a huge impact on the economy. According to

statistics from the French Ministry of Labor on April 22, about 10.2 million employees from private enterprises were “partially unemployed,” accounting for half of the private enterprise employees in the entire country. As a result, the government had to subsidize these partially unemployed people.

Third, some proposals or practices of the French government were somewhat specious, especially on the issue of face masks. The government issued a decree on March 13, expropriating medical masks held by all legal persons across the country to guarantee the supply for medical personnel. But at the same time, the government repeatedly instilled in the public the idea that masks have no obvious protective effect on healthy people, that wearing masks is not as effective as frequently washing hands, and that ordinary people do not know how to properly wear masks. These specious ideas had an impact on epidemic prevention efforts by ordinary people.

Fourth, French people’s free and undisciplined national character was fully exposed in the face of the epidemic. On the eve of the implementation of the stay-at-home order, French people took to the streets to enjoy their “last freedom” in restaurants and bars. Twenty days after the order came into effect, French police had handed out a total of 530,000 fines for those who did not obey the order.

Although France’s anti-epidemic performance had flaws, objectively speaking, each country chose their anti-epidemic strategy in light of the character of their own national conditions and system. Thanks to economic factors, cultural factors, and national characteristics, most Western countries took similar approaches to that of France. France also demonstrated its

valuable social resilience in the fight against the epidemic.

The French medical system launched its “white plan” in late February, mobilizing medical students and retired doctors to assist on the front line and racing against time to increase the number of intensive care unit beds. The number of intensive care unit beds in France was originally insufficient, but by the end of March, the number increased from 5,000 to 10,000, with an aim to reach 15,000. In spite of the shortage of anti-epidemic materials early on, medical staff demonstrated their professionalism. Some of them took risks to stick to their post day and night without any protective equipment. All levels of government and enterprises in France embarked on importing face masks, while at the same time speeding up local production to full capacity. From April 1, France’s mask reserve basically met the demands of medical staff.

Facing the pandemic, various regions, social strata, soldiers and civilians in France were tightly woven together. The government used military aircraft, high-speed trains, and ships to send severe patients to the western and southern regions where medical resources are relatively abundant. Hospitals based in the western and southern regions also assigned medical staff to aid the eastern region. The army built a battlefield hospital with 30 intensive care unit beds within 10 days. All walks of life have shown their sense of perspective. Many auto companies such as Renault switched to producing breathing machines, and luxury goods giants such as Louis Vuitton switched to producing alcohol, disposable hand sanitizer, face masks and so on. All the major media were engaged in spreading mainstream values with positive energy. Every night

at 8 o'clock, all the people spontaneously applauded and cheered the medical staff — a very touching picture.

So far, the French medical system as a whole has withstood the blow of the pandemic at its peak, without seeing a significant number of patients left untreated or hospitals being forced to select patients for medical treatment. In general, the government's epidemic prevention actions won support from most people.

France and Germany are the two core powers and bellwethers of the EU. Europe means a lot to France. During the pandemic, France has striven to play a leading role in Europe as coordinator of anti-epidemic actions and defender of EU solidarity. After the outbreak in Italy, despite France's own shortages, it still provided 1 million masks and 20,000 protective suits to Italy, 7 tons of protective materials to Germany, and exported more than 2 million masks to other EU countries. With the pandemic continuing, France proactively called on European countries to coordinate cooperation and not fight the virus individually. It requested member countries take uniform steps when formulating border management and control measures. In the early stage of the epidemic, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent charter flights globally to assist 22 EU members to evacuate 150,000 nationals around the world. When the epidemic in France became very serious, the French government also had some of its severe patients treated in Germany, Luxembourg, Austria and other countries.

In terms of its economy, France firmly held the flag of solidarity, coordinating between Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy and pushing the EU to shelve divisions to pass a

540 billion euro (\$590 billion)-package of measures to bolster economic recovery. President Macron treated whether Europe could be united to respond the epidemic as a major test for European unity, to which he attached much importance from a strategic perspective. It can be said that France has been the most proactive promoter of EU's united efforts in fighting against the pandemic.

With regards to anti-epidemic cooperation between China and France, Zhai said that France is the first country that established diplomatic ties with China. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, China and France have maintained good cooperation in maintaining multilateralism and jointly fighting against the epidemic.

After the outbreak, the French president and the minister of Foreign Affairs expressed their condolences and support in the phone calls to Chinese leaders and provided three batches of medical supplies to China, including 832,200 medical masks, 630 sets of protective clothing, and 965,000 pairs of medical gloves. When the epidemic spread in France, President Xi Jinping sent a message of condolences to President Macron, called him to express his support, and also offered China's experience in fighting the epidemic. China has also provided some material assistance to France, including 50,000 medical N95 masks, 10,000 medical protective clothing suits, one million medical surgical face masks and 1.5 million pairs of medical gloves. China is also going to provide tens of thousands of test reagents.

In general, China and France have had good anti-epidemic cooperation. France mobilized civil aviation aircraft between

China and France, building an air bridge in between the two nations. France secured seven government charter flights through diplomatic channels. Since March, the Civil Aviation Administration of China has approved France's applications for a total of 117 freight aircraft flights, mainly for the transportation of purchased medical supplies. In addition, Sino-French cooperation in antiviral drug research and vaccine research is also progressing. The Institut Pasteur of Shanghai, Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Institut Pasteur based in Paris are planning to engage in tripartite cooperation in Africa between China, France and Africa.

Compared with other Western countries, France's reaction to China's anti-epidemic efforts has been friendly. Especially at the levels of leaders and government, they have supported China's fight against the epidemic in various forms. President Macron said in a call with President Xi that he believed that under President Xi's strong leadership, the Chinese government and people have shown great courage and taken decisive measures to control the epidemic in a short period of time, which was highly appreciated by him. Later, the epidemic in France became severe, and in Xi's call to Macron, Macron expressed his gratitude to China for its friendly assistance and his expectation to strengthen comprehensive cooperation and demonstrate the two countries' firm determination to fight against the epidemic.

Over the past three years, President Xi had three phone calls with Macron, the most compared with other Western leaders. When China's epidemic was serious, Macron expressed in a phone call that France would provide three types of support

to China. First, France would provide anti-epidemic materials as soon as possible. Second, France would offer technical assistance and send French medical experts and epidemic prevention experts to communicate and cooperate with Chinese experts. Third, France would provide political support. For instance, he would pay a visit to China. If it were not for the severe epidemic in France since then, he would have visited China in late March to support the Chinese people in their fight against the epidemic with his practical actions. Some former French politicians also expressed support for China on social media. The then French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin visited China during SARS in 2003, which, at the critical moment, embodied the friendship that has gone through sufferings and difficulties, and impressed Chinese leaders and people. In addition, France performed well on multilateral occasions such as the G7 meeting, during which it opposed the use of the name “Wuhan virus” put forward by the US. France has also performed well in the UN, the G20 summit and other international occasions in terms of the joint fight against the epidemic.

We should also notice that on March 29, French Secretary of State for European Affairs Amelie de Montchalin made negative remarks on Radio France International, Le Monde, and France TV, saying, “It’s sometimes easier to spread propaganda, pretty images and sometimes to exploit what is happening,” accusing China and Russia of using the delivery of medical equipment to help spread propaganda in Europe. Negative voices heard from the French media recently are not small in quantity.

In general, France has more common interests with China compared with other Western countries, maintaining a deeply rooted mutual relationship. Ideal Sino-French cooperation in maintaining multilateralism and jointly fighting against the pandemic has been maintained. To date, France has not followed the US to defame China.

Zhai said that even as the epidemic in France continues, scholars and professionals have expressed their insights focusing on the epidemic's huge impact on international relations, the world economy, social management models and culture. They have also looked ahead to the post-epidemic world situation.

First, scholars and professionals widely believed that the epidemic is the most severe crisis faced by human society since World War II, with a profound influence. However, the extent to which it will impact human society is hard to predict. Most scholars expressed concerns, contending that the flaws of the current global management system have been fully exposed by the epidemic, and "international society" has become an empty phrase. Nationalist and populist sentiments will further spread, accelerating the dissolution of a series of multilateral organizations.

In contrast, some believe that the epidemic provides an opportunity to correct errors and makes people realize the importance of solidarity and mutual assistance as well as the dangers of division and estrangement. In the long run, this round of adjustment will help build a new internationalism.

Many scholars have paid attention to the changes the epidemic has brought to the international balance of power, saying that while fighting the virus, the major powers in the

world are also engaged in a secret competition for influence. Affected by the epidemic, Western hegemony is quickly declining. The US has further diminished its world leadership role, and the EU is overwhelmed by its own affairs. China is becoming the biggest winner by filling the vacuum with its anti-epidemic diplomacy.

During this time of crisis, European countries took actions independently, leaving a complex collective memory for the people. European integration will face a greater crisis of trust. In the future, the EU will face new and difficult choices, either to speed up the pace of unity and self-strengthening under the pressure of the epidemic, or to accelerate the union's decline.

As for the world economy, it is generally believed that the virus has brought about a twofold crisis in both the health and economic fields. The world economy is expected to see a decline by about 5 percent in 2020, resulting in widespread enterprise bankruptcies, high unemployment rates and an increase in poverty. All countries are introducing policies to save their economies, spending huge sums of money to subsidize small- and medium-sized enterprises, help the unemployed, and guarantee loans from banks. However, if the epidemic continues, global public debt will skyrocket, and financially fragile southern European countries like Italy may fall into a debt crisis again.

Many experts opined that the epidemic will reshape the world economy and lead to “de-globalization.” Western countries will intensify protection over strategic economic sectors, strengthen their determination for “re-industrialization” and reduce their dependence on China. The current global

industrial chain with China at its core will evolve into a “polycentric” industrial chain with regional cooperation as the backbone. Macron has noted that lessons must be drawn from the epidemic, saying Europe should no longer rely on others after the epidemic but strengthen its sovereignty over some important companies and key products. However, there are also contrasting views that the epidemic will not change the process of globalization.

Industrial transfer is easy to say but difficult to do, and the reorganization of the industrial chain will eventually benefit places with active consumption. Europe, with an aging population, will hardly benefit from it.

As for social governance models, it was widely believed that the governments of European countries and the US generally had an unsatisfactory performance and these countries should reflect on the current Western democracy and social governance model. It is believed that the government was too lax, politicians lacked a sense of responsibility, and parties placed their own interests and economic interests first, which are all important reasons for the ineffective response to the epidemic. Some experts pointed out that the West turned a blind eye to China’s experience due to their arrogance and ideological bias, missing the best time to control the epidemic.

Many people hold a deeply-rooted bias against China, questioning whether China fabricated data, and spoke highly of the anti-epidemic models of Singapore, Japan, Korea and even Taiwan. Some scholars said that the epidemic has not ended, and it is too early to draw the conclusion that democracy is declining. A democratic system is twofold. On the one hand, it is

destined to be weaker than an “authoritarian system” because of its spontaneous tendency which is loose and disorderly; on the other hand, it has a strong ability to self-repair. The epidemic prompted people to reflect, and promoted governments and society to establish a more balanced contractual relationship between rights and responsibilities.

In terms of Western culture and lifestyle, many scholars have started to reflect on the cultural differences exposed by the epidemic. Westerners have paid a heavy price for their unfounded sense of security and excessive freedom. By contrast, the genes of obedience and collective cohesion in Confucian culture have empowered Asian countries to respond more quickly and effectively to the epidemic.

Some scholars contended that the epidemic also exposed the fragility of post-modern civilization and will reshape human lifestyles. Convenient transport and unrestricted travel sped up the spread of the virus, which will force the public to change a lifestyle that features hedonism and individualism, and drive them to pay more attention to the natural environment and climate change, accelerate the transformation of the economy toward an ecological- and environmental-friendly direction, and reconsider the advantages of digital technology and the protection of personal privacy.

According to Zhai, experts now have divided opinions on the changes in the world before and after the epidemic. The world, still changing, is full of uncertainty and needs further observation.

First, the epidemic had an all-round impact on France and Europe, causing huge losses and wielding a lasting influence. In

the long run, the situation is controllable, and chaos will not be seen in political, economic and social spheres. The tendency of European integration will not reverse. As for China, it should continue strengthening cooperation with Europe under the frameworks of the UN, WHO and G20, especially in the public health field and Africa-related fields. In terms of the economic and trade fields, we should continue cooperation on big projects, push forward the signing of a China-EU bilateral investment agreement to realize more binding benefits, and maintain the European market and China-Europe industrial chain through France.

Second, after the domestic fight against COVID-19 has achieved a phased victory, we should realize that China, with a rising international influence, is confronted with increasingly severe challenges, especially strategic pressure from the US. China and the US have a stark contrast in their approaches to fighting against the epidemic, and the capacity demonstrated by China greatly concerned the US, which fueled its impulse to contain China. The other big powers' awareness of potential danger and the psychology of self-protection made our plan of developing Sino-US relations at the global strategic level more complicated. Under the current situation, we must have bottom-line thinking, make full preparations, and adhere to a consistent principle toward the US, fighting resolutely in where we must, and cooperating in where we should, while at the same not having any unrealistic fantasies. We should also hold high the banner of unity and cooperation, occupy the commanding heights of international morality, and form an extensive united front.

Third, diplomacy is an extension of internal affairs. The purpose of diplomacy today is still to provide a favorable environment for the development of the country. I think our main task at the moment is still to manage domestic affairs effectively, and in this way, to stay at a strategically advantageous position. Diplomacy must focus on this core task, advocate the good traditions of the past, operate in a meticulous and prudent manner, and have unified thinking, consistent steps, and rigorous expression of our views.

Prof. Dong Qiang, chair of the Department of French at PKU's School of Foreign Languages, pointed out in his presentation that, first, the epidemic allowed us to have a clear picture of French domestic affairs. As an advanced country in epidemic research, France is very confident. But after Macron came to power, the French government has been staffed by youngsters to an unprecedented extent. As a young politician, President Macron is energetic and has demonstrated the courage to take responsibility and confront difficulties during the epidemic. But it should also be noticed that this "young" government lacks experience in responding to epidemics and is a bit caught off guard, giving people an impression of a lack of humanistic care.

Second, China and France have kept very good bilateral political relations. At the beginning of the epidemic, the French consulate in Wuhan was the only foreign consulate not closed in the city. Since then, the French ambassador to China has made it clear that after the epidemic eases in April, he will bring all French-speaking countries' ambassadors to support Wuhan. This showed France's consistent pro-China attitude. But at the same

time, the epidemic has also led to a weakening of some aspects of the Sino-French relations, mainly manifested in media reports. French public opinion is shown to be consistent with public opinion in other Western countries. It can be said that this epidemic is a warning.

Third, France plays a role as a coordinator and leader in Europe. But Germany did a very good job in fighting against the epidemic. The incumbent EU council president was from Germany. Germany is unknowingly increasing its influence in the EU, which may play a major role in the direction of the EU. Perhaps this is more important than what the French say or the posture they take. Whether France's influence in Europe will weaken due to its unsatisfying performance in the epidemic is a question worth paying attention to.

Prof. Yang Zhuang from PKU's National School of Development said that over the past ten years, he has been engaged in teaching comparative management in the MBA business course at the National School of Development, which mainly involves global leadership and cross-cultural leadership.

Leadership is the art of making a group work hard toward a common goal. At present, in the process of fighting the epidemic in countries around the world, whether a country's leader can make timely forward-looking decisions that adapt to the country's national economy and national life safety has demonstrated the characteristics of the country's leader. President Macron was able to admit his mistakes in the early stages of the epidemic in public, and he did not insist on his mistakes. This is very different from US President Trump. If Trump is scored in terms of leadership, he will fail. Leadership

is an art. With the changing situation of the country, a necessary condition for interaction between leaders and subordinates is to respond to the situation of the country. Under different cultural and economic situations, leaders must also have their own specialties. Leadership is the ability to cross context and cultural boundaries.

Leadership has multiple models. One model, mentioned by James Kouzes, chairman emeritus of the Tom Peters Company in his book *The Leadership Challenge*, has five fundamentals: “believe you can,” “aspire to excel,” “challenge yourself,” “engage support,” and “practice deliberately.”

If we examine Trump with these five items, we will find that, first, he did not “practice deliberately.” For example, he insisted on not wearing a mask. He hardly “aspired to excel,” because from the outbreak of the epidemic to date, he has had his own focus on many issues and behaved completely according to his own will. In regard to “challenge yourself,” when things went wrong, he started to pass the buck not only to China and Europe, but also to the state governors. With his failure in achieving these three fundamentals, it is hard to “engage support” or persuade others to “believe you can.” When major problems occurred in the US, there have been great deviations between the US federal government, the state governments and city governments. The top leaders failed in proposing a common vision or making strategic decisions that could make subordinates work together, thus missing the best time and opportunity for epidemic prevention.

Macron is more than 30 years younger than Trump. Although in short of experience, he has all the fundamentals to

be an exemplary leader, from the perspective of this leadership model. Macron acknowledged his mistakes in his speech in March, which is a quite valuable deed for a leader. A leader that could not set an example by personal diligent practice and uniting all forces is not a qualified leader. In this regard, Macron is qualified for a score of B+.

A leader's vision, professionalism, and decisiveness in making decisions are important prerequisites for a country to defeat the epidemic. Although better than Italy and Spain in epidemic prevention, France was not as good as Germany in this respect. In my view, although the leadership and charm of a country's leader is a prerequisite to defeat an epidemic, a country's economic system and value system are also a condition to ensure the implementation of leadership. In history, France's pursuit of individual freedom and national democracy, and its hatred of rulers, especially authoritarians, is deep. France is also an extremely open country. In this sense, faced with the challenge of the epidemic, the cultural challenge is big for Macron. If he cannot overcome this challenge, even if he made greater efforts or played a greater role model, it will still be difficult for him to achieve his goals.

The differences between Eastern and Western cultures have been particularly prominent in this epidemic. Whether it is in Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea or Japan, people behaved completely different from Westerners, such as the Americans, who fought against Trump's lockdown measures and took up banners to declare that they want freedom. We believe that Easterners tend to take precautions and be prepared for danger in times of peace, while Westerners would rather live

happily in the world than suffer their due fate. Therefore, under the epidemic, people of Eastern countries self-isolate, while the West takes the attitude of letting things drift. China's cultural concepts and thinking have been vividly demonstrated in this process.

China develops based on its own national conditions, so these measures are practical only in the Chinese environment. In a diversified world, each country has its own cultural, historical, geographical and value systems. After the epidemic, the world will feature a different situation. In the future, China should do well in the following aspects. First, it should improve mutual trust with other countries. The key to trust is transparency, which means that we should protect our honesty as we protect our lives. Second, China should improve its soft power. China has a long history and culture. If it cannot put forward its own ideology and values, the world will think that China has only made great economic achievements but will not identify with us in terms of ideology or major values. Last not but least, highly developed technology has brought challenges to the living environment of human beings, such as the environment, air, and soil pollution. If we do not pay attention to these issues in future development, we would put the cart before the horse in terms of economic development.

Zheng Zhijie, director of the Department of Global Health in PKU's School of Public Health, mentioned in his presentation that the epidemic is the biggest public emergency since the 1918 influenza pandemic, pushing the issue of health to the fore for humanity. During the first two decades of the 21st century, several global outbreaks of major health emergencies of similar

scale occurred, from SARS in 2003 to bird flu in 2005, to swine flu in 2009, and then to Ebola, affecting more and more people. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, almost no country or region has been spared. Such a situation has put the non-traditional issue of global health security in the forefront for people all over the world.

The epidemic exposed the fact that almost every country has big health security problems, not only in the prevention, control and monitoring of new diseases and re-emerging infectious diseases, but also in response to various situations. In terms of global health, the first line of defense in European and American countries is prevention, and the second line of defense is prevention of imported cases. The second line of defense is more about the discovery of the epidemic in other countries and then dealing effectively with the prevention of imported cases so that most problems can be basically solved. However, this epidemic has caused a total collapse of both lines of defense in almost every country.

In light of the epidemic, China needs to strengthen global health governance, especially its capacity in the health field. In the past, China did not play its due role on many international occasions related to global governance. For instance, China did not know the ins and outs of many issues of the WHO. In the future, China must understand issues, grasp issues, and put forward China's demands in the field of global health governance. In addition, we must take the initiative to put forward our propositions and plans in the global health field, and actively set issues. This relates to China's discourse in the global health field, which needs to be strengthened urgently.

In terms of diplomacy, health issues previously ranked as a lower priority on a country's diplomatic spectrum. But this aspect needs greater emphasis in the future. The global spread of the epidemic has shown that health issues will cause a severe impact on a country's politics, economy and multiple social dimensions. It is important to enhance international cooperation and exchanges.

With regard to international assistance, China in the past more played the role as a country receiving assistance, but this role is now undergoing changes. For example, China has engaged in long-term medical assistance to Africa and sent medical teams to more than 50 African countries to provide them with medical help. There is still space to expand in this respect. For example, we can assist medical teams via embassies to guide local epidemic prevention and control work.

Regarding the cooperation between China and France in public health, Prof. Zheng believes that as the epidemic spreads, Africa, as a region with a relatively weak public health system, is likely to experience large-scale humanitarian disasters. China and France have a lot of room for cooperation on fighting the epidemic in Africa. The two governments should intensify cooperation, especially through the support of the WHO or through trilateral relationships, to strengthen support for Africa.

In addition, in the past five decades, the UK and the US have had a relatively strong voice in the field of global health, while France and Germany have been in a relatively weak position. The two countries are constantly working to amplify their voices. For example, nine French universities established the Global Health Alliance last year to increase research in the

field of global health, including global health governance issues. Germany also established the Institute of Global Health in Berlin. In this regard, there is a huge space for China-Europe, China-France, and China-Germany cooperation. It is hoped that through China-Europe cooperation, a path of mutual support and compensation for each other's weaknesses can be created. Although the US is criticizing the WHO and may even find an alternative in the future, I believe that China-Europe cooperation will play a very important role in the development of various areas of global health.

The epidemic also forced the globe to reconsider the ultimate goal of development. The process of globalization, energy flows, trade development, and the deterioration of the natural environment are important factors affecting global health and global health security. In the future, China must continue to increase research and cooperation in the field of global health and play a greater role in global health security issues. We must realize that global health security involves not only the medical and health fields, but also other related fields. We should explore from different perspectives such as politics, economics, culture, society, and diplomacy to form a comprehensive solution.

During the Q&A session, participants and the audience had a discussion on the above presentations.

Question: In light of globalization, public health issues have gradually evolved into an international issue beyond the health field, which particularly need interdisciplinary perspectives. With regard to France, does the epidemic have a far-reaching impact on the development of the relations between France and other European countries and the integration of

Europe?

Currently, China and the US have a strained relationship, while France, the UK and the US are traditional allies. Will Macron follow the Trump administration, which says it will hold China accountable? What impact will the epidemic bring to Sino-French relations and US-France relations?

Zhai Jun: The integration of Europe has indeed confronted many frustrations over recent years and there are multiple reasons. The epidemic posed a new test to the integration of Europe. New problems arose between France and other European countries, amongst almost all European countries, and even amongst all countries of the world. Personally, I think it may force European countries to take more practical and effective measures on the issue of European integration. Brexit was already a setback for European integration, but Brexit did not cause a chain reaction, because other countries did not follow suit. Generally, the trend of integration will not be reversed.

In terms of US-France relations, first, we should know that they are allies with shared values and ideologies. But as we said, France is special among Western countries, having a closer tie with us. First, France is the first country that established diplomatic ties with China when China was in difficulties and isolated in the international community. At the time, China's relations with the US and Russia were less than ideal and China was domestically suffering from three years of the great Chinese famine. In light of the situation, the establishment of diplomatic ties was a great success. In Zhai's opinion, the Sino-French relationship has always been special. First, France is politically

independent. In terms of culture, France made great contributions to the enlightenment, and thus has a strong pride in its culture. Such pride is reflected in its strong political independence, resulting in its unwillingness to be completely bound to the US.

In light of today's international situation, the US pursues unilateralism while France pursues multilateralism. As allies, the US and France have different opinions on a slew of questions, especially during Trump's administration. Facing an especially complicated international situation and relations, we cannot simply distinguish between black and white. From the point of view of our country, we should try to win more friends. We would like to develop relations with all the other countries in the world, including the US. We do not intend to worsen any relations and it is the US, not China, that strained the relations. China is passive. Sino-French relations are important in the current situation. The epidemic poses challenges in that the complexity of the epidemic makes relations more complicated. In this regard, more efforts are needed to seek common ground while reserving differences and drawing on our advantages and avoiding disadvantages in order to improve relations. We should strive to maintain good traditions in Sino-French relations in this new historical period to keep France as our friend in the West. President Macron is a very accomplished president and it is hoped that China and France could maintain traditional friendly relations during the Macron administration.

Dong Qiang: The state of the EU is concerning but the progress of EU integration is irreversible. Based on the common interests of the Europeans, integration does more good than

harm. I am totally confident about the prospects of the EU, and the current panic and worry are only temporary. In terms of the relations between France and the US, we should understand that France is independent and at the same time, it is not a superpower. But it was once a very strong power and still plays an important role in the world today and a leading role in Europe.

Macron has a very clear strategy and can be said to be the politician with the best strategic vision among all Western leaders. He is quite clear about what France wants to do in Europe, what attitude it needs to adopt with China and Russia, and has made very clear policies in this regard. From this perspective, I think that at least during Macron's presidency, France could not get too close to the US or have a confrontation with China.

Zhai Jun: France and Germany are two core countries and bellwethers in the EU. Without France and Germany, the EU would not exist. Germany is strong economically. We acknowledge that Angela Merkel is a senior politician with high prestige and strong abilities. Macron is a rising star, young and promising, with ambitions. Merkel is about to retire, so Macron's role in the future cannot be underestimated. Macron recently made a speech. He said he believes that the world today has two powers: the US and China. Europe cannot be attached to either of the two powers. This also shows the relationship between France and the US. France cannot become a third power on its own but has to rely on the Europe, making Europe a third power. France is making efforts toward this goal. France is the only EU member state with a permanent seat on the UN

Security Council. Both France and Germany play an important role in the EU, and the EU cannot succeed without the two countries. Currently, although there are divergences between France and Germany, Merkel and Macron cooperate well in general. Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, was recommended by Macron. Although she is German, she speaks good French.

Question: Ambassador Zhai, what do you think should we do to show our sincerity, as Prof. Yang Zhuang mentioned, to France and win the trust of France?

Zhai Jun: China is the world's second-largest economy and France is a middle power with its GDP ranking at fifth or sixth in the world. In my opinion, we should first do our own things well, seeking further development. The common ground between China and France is mainly in the fields of culture, economics, investment and trade. Different national conditions determine that we could not share the same ideology. So, we should first do our own business well and then win their recognition and trust with our achievements.

Second, we should seek common ground while accepting differences. There is much French culture worth learning from and I believe that they've also learned much from us. When President Xi visited France last year, Macron sent *An Introduction to The Analects of Confucius*, published in 1688, to Xi as a national gift. Macron said that the early translations of *The Analects of Confucius* had inspired French thinkers Montesquieu and Voltaire. During Macron's visit to China in the second half of last year, Xi gave him a copy of *La Traviata*, which was the first foreign novel translated in China at the end

of the 19th century. The mutual cultural influence and references between the two countries provide the basis and momentum for approaching each other. We need to find more common ground and exert more efforts there.

Our differences lie in ideology. It is impossible for either China or France to change their own ideology. During my five-year term as ambassador to France, I had never thought of persuading France to approach our ideology. I believe they could not persuade us, either. The way out is to seek common ground while accepting differences. The world is diverse. It is not an either-or question for the development of different countries. What we can do is to do our own things well, make friends around the world, seek common ground while accepting differences, and create good conditions for our development. Only when we develop effectively, will the others recognize us and respect us, and will our story be convincing.

Prof. Qian Chengdan said at the conclusion of the workshop that the observation and analysis of the epidemic in France was very successful. Ambassador Zhai Jun made a wonderful presentation offering perspectives of the epidemic's development in France, Macron's prevention and control measures, Sino-French cooperation in related fields and the future development of the relations between the two countries. The participating scholars also gave high-quality speeches on the above topics based on their respective research fields, helping us better understand the epidemic situation and analyze the future of Sino-French relations under the epidemic. Prof. Qian said that in the future, PKUIAS will hold more academic activities related to area studies, and will welcome the

participation of these scholars again.