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## **“Europe, China and the United Nations in the Era of Crisis”-Review of the Ideas of EU-China Think Tank Dialogue**

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From January 14 to 15, 2016, the Institute of International and Strategic Studies of Peking University and the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) jointly held a seminar entitled “Europe, China and the United Nations in the Era of Crisis” at Peking University. Experts present at the seminar have discussed hot regional issues and policies of common concern from the perspectives of China and the EU respectively.

The seminar falls into five parts. The theme of the first part is “One Belt and One Road and the Future of Collective Security”. According to a European scholar, “One Belt and One Road” can help China play a bigger role in wider regions from Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Middle East and realize collective security, and it is hoped that China can incorporate the EU and Turkey into this plan; however, it is still not clear whether Europe is economically driven or geopolitically driven by “One Belt and One Road” and there is still

doubt on the relationship between “One Belt and One Road” and the Eurasian Economic Union advocated by Russia; Europe also hopes that China can shoulder greater responsibilities for the Middle East problems and the consequent anti-terrorism and refugees.

According to a Chinese scholar, the concept of “collective security” is not easily accepted in the Chinese context and the concept of “common security” or “mutual security” is more appropriate; the key to “One Belt and One Road” is “interconnectedness” and the starting point for China to put forward this plan is to promote its own economic development (particularly for inland provinces), coordinate the interaction between domestic and foreign policies of China, facilitate South-South cooperation, and create favorable conditions for solving such problems as extremism, organized crimes and even terrorism through regional economic development. He has also stressed that “One Belt and One Road” has provided opportunities for deepening China-EU comprehensive partnership and Europe should be aware of the long-term benefits of “One Belt and One Road” to the EU and its partners and it is also hoped that Europe should not try to isolate Russia. Another Chinese scholar has pointed out that “One Belt and One Road” is a geo-economic concept rather than a geopolitical concept; China and the EU can strengthen cooperation in trade, investment and infrastructure construction in Central and Eastern European countries, but barriers still exist for in-depth cooperation due to the differences in decision-making mechanisms, political system, and ideology of China and the EU and the presence of the US.

In the discussion session of this part, an American scholar stated that geo-economy and geopolitics are always interconnected and a nation usually tries to realize its own geopolitical objectives through closer interconnectedness. A European scholar has also expressed the expectation for China to play a bigger role in stabilizing the

international order and geopolitics through its own economic power. One Chinese scholar has responded by stressing that “One Belt and One Road” is economically driven rather than politically driven and China has learned lessons from American and Russian intervention in the Middle East affairs, hence hoping to avoid the potential risks of overstretch. He has also suggested that Europe should carefully consider “which can bring more benefits to Europe, NATO’s eastward expansion and the EU expansion or the stable relations between the EU and Russia” and should adopt the strategy of “selective contact” with Russia. Another Chinese scholar has pointed out in the response that the influence of Russia in Central Asia should not be ignored, so not only China’s “One Belt and One Road” requires cooperation with Russia, the EU should also cooperate with Russia. In the end, according to a Chinese scholar, considerations for China to less actively intervene in the Middle East include: 1) Decision-makers of China and the Chinese people all tend to believe that the US should bear the major responsibilities for the Middle East; 2) China lacks effective means of intervention; 3) China is too busy with handling the changes in neighboring security situations.

The theme of the second part is “Changing Geopolitics for Energy Security”. According to a European scholar, the present energy security issue consists of three parts: 1) Due to the plummeting oil price, the global energy market is becoming disorderly and the international energy governance mechanism is gradually malfunctioning; 2) Owing to the impact from the fierce geopolitical competition among powers, the international energy market has lost its flexibility; 3) The crash of the energy market has caused internal instability among authoritative nations relying on energy revenue; and it is suggested that China and the EU should both pay attention to the changes in Central Asia and strengthen cooperation in rule of law, anti-corruption and other fields related to the improvement

of business environment in Central Asia. A Chinese scholar has analyzed the plight of Russian energy companies after the sharp decrease of oil price and the sanctions by the EU on Russia and pointed out that due to the depreciation of ruble and the adjustment of domestic industrial policies in Russia (particularly the large amount of subsidies provided by the Russian government to energy companies), the plight of Russian energy companies in crisis has been partly eased though the above-mentioned countermeasures are costly and cannot last for long.

During the discussion, a Chinese scholar pinpointed that China and the EU should strengthen cooperation in clean energy. A European scholar has also pointed out that the EU is diversifying its energy sources. Countries in Northern Europe and near the Baltic Sea have started to import natural gas from the US. Southern European countries have also gained access to the natural gas from Caucasus, the Middle East and in the future Central Asia through the Aegean Sea and southern Mediterranean. On the environmental issue, he has stressed that the 20-USD oil price is a huge disaster for the global environment. In addition, he has also mentioned the necessity of incorporating China into the international energy governance mechanism and the benefits from China's participation in the open international energy market, in particular on the reduction of China's reliance on the China-Russia long-term energy supply contract. Afterwards, a Chinese scholar has responded by pointing out that China is negotiating to join the new International Energy Charter Treaty.

The theme of the third part is "Crisis Regulation and Control in China-EU Relations". An American scholar pointed out that the EU eagerly expects China to more actively participate in peace-keeping actions and make more contribution to international development programs on humanitarian assistance. He has also mentioned

that on the 70th General Assembly of the United Nations in 2015 President Xi Jinping has expressed to build a peace-keeping troop of 8,000 soldiers and provide funds for building conflict prevention programs, which is an active signal to international peace keeping. Meanwhile, he has pointed out that the EU is still doubtful about two issues: 1) Whether China can fulfill the above-mentioned commitment and make greater contributions, particularly when the priority of China's security policies is still placed on neighboring security; 2) China and the EU have divergences on the understanding of international norms because China stresses the principle of sovereignty while the EU stresses the principle of humanitarian intervention. Afterwards, a Chinese scholar believes though China and the EU have conducted a series of cooperation on security, one of the reasons for the difficulties in deepening the cooperation is that Western Asia and Northern Africa still rank low on the list of objectives for external security of China.

In the discussion session, one Chinese scholar stated that the EU's double standard on anti-terrorism in Xijiang is a serious problem and if the two sides lack the basic consensus on the issue of Xinjiang, taking joint actions is out of the question. A European scholar has responded by saying that in the past 15 years, the EU's position on the issue of Xinjiang is gradually softening, but there is still a gap between the positions of the two sides.

The theme of the fourth part is "Threats Brought by Extremism and Countermeasures". One European scholar said that extremism is influenced by three factors: 1) Individual's deep dissatisfaction with the reality; 2) The spread of radical ideologies; 3) The formation of mobilization and organization networks; he has also pointed out that the global expansion of the extremist thought of Sunni and the confrontation of the Sunni group with other groups have formed an overwhelming vicious circle while the highly flexible ideology

of “Islamic states” enables it to meet various psychological needs of extremism in this vicious circle. One Chinese scholar has also pointed out that “Islamic states” themselves play three roles, namely extremist groups, political organizations with the initial shape of countries, and religious militia organizations representing the interests of Sunni. If we cannot conduct long-time targeted guidance of opinion supplemented by a rational geopolitical arrangement and regional economic and social development plan, it is difficult to root out the social foundation of “Islamic states”; relevant parties should learn lessons from the rise of “Islamic State”, stress the role of powerful local governments in maintaining the local order, and should not easily resort to regime change or military intervention; at last, according to him, stabilizing the Middle East situation itself is the most effective way to deal with the threats from extremism.

In the discussion session, one European scholar has pointed out that the political negotiation on the issue of Syria is multi-faceted. First of all, it concerns the negotiation between the US and Russia and secondly between Iran and Saudi Arabia at the regional level; thirdly, the negotiation is conducted between the Syrian government and other armed groups; the last level is the interaction among anti-government armed groups and China may play its role in the two levels of negotiations in the middle. Some Chinese scholars have pointed out that ASEM may be a beneficial framework to promote China-EU cooperation on anti-terrorism. In addition, we should pay attention to the terrorism in Southeast Asia and Central Asia. Other Chinese scholars have responded by pointing out that the terrorism in Southeast Asia is also caused by the Middle East; but the priority of Central Asia lies in Uzbekistan where extremism can lead to serious consequences; on the issue of extremism elimination in the field of ideology, the international community badly needs the cooperation of countries in the Middle East.

The theme of the fifth part is “Refugee Crisis: the Common Challenge?”. One European scholar remarked that the EU faces many difficulties in handling the refugee crisis: 1) While the financial budget of the EU itself is tight, it will be increasingly difficult to realize the humanitarian resettlement for refugees; 2) It is difficult to solve the frictions between refugees and the local society, particularly against the backdrop of the rise of right-wing forces inside European countries in recent years; 3) It is also difficult to handle the long-time residence and job-seeking for refugees and while the unemployment rate of the EU is still quite high, it is rather impractical to say that receiving refugees can ease the labor force shortage of the EU. One Chinese scholar has pointed out that the refugee burden of Northwestern European countries with better social and economic conditions is already too heavy and the boundary management system of the EU, in particular the refugee immigration supervision mechanism, has added insult to injury for the imbalanced distribution of refugee burden; but the EU should not continue to follow the US on the Middle East issues, which is the key to solving the problems of refugees.

In the discussion session of this part, this European scholar further stressed that the wording of “European refugee crisis” is in appropriate because this crisis is a global humanitarian crisis and the burden from refugees should be shared by the whole world. Afterwards, a Chinese scholar has responded by pointing out that if the EU really wants to solve the problems, it should try to stabilize the situation in the Middle East; The Chinese society does not identify with the policy proposition that China should appropriate money to help the EU solve the problems of refugees; China lacks experience and professionals on immigration and its culture and society are really unique, so it is hard for China to allocate refugees who can also hardly adapt to the environment of China. At last, an American scholar has stressed that the existing international

mechanism (including the United Nations) is becoming increasingly at elbows in dealing with the problems of refugees while new regional conflicts emerge one after another; the EU suffers from an increasingly bigger capital gap in assisting refugees and really needs the assistance from all parties.

During the concluding session at last, a European scholar pointed out that China is in the process of transforming its international position with the co-existence of the traditional diplomatic style of evading risks and the brand-new, enterprising diplomatic posture and there is a tension between the two; Europe is willing to publicly discuss with China various issues from anti-terrorism to refugees and respect various differences in crisis understanding, cognition of state interest and the culture between China and the EU. A Chinese scholar has also pointed out that the biggest difference between China and the EU in relevant policies is that Europe has already taken actions on these issues while China is still at the stage of exploring facts and analyzing the situation with a lack of relevant capabilities and knowledge reserve and worries more about domestic social and economic problems and neighboring security; the difference in views between China and the EU is the difference between China in the process of modernization and Europe which has already entered the stage of post-modernization and between China with high consistency among its citizens and Europe with a highly diversified society; the policy proposition of contributing money and goods to help Europe solve the above-mentioned problems can hardly get any support within China.

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