

SUMMARIES

The Instrumentality of International Sanction Regimes and the Case of Western Sanctions on Russia **Timofeev, Sokolova and Rozhdestvenskaya**

Sanctions are restrictive measures taken by individual countries, alliances of countries, and international organizations to achieve political goals. As a foreign policy tool of modern states, sanctions usually have an economic attribute, but their essence is to achieve political goals through economic restrictions. As the primary architect of sanctions, the United States has imposed sanctions on more occasions than all other countries and international organizations combined. Sanctions represent a significant aspect of the EU's foreign policy, offering a means of partially compensating for the EU's relative lack of military power while pursuing certain political objectives. Since its withdrawal from the European Union, the United Kingdom has pursued an independent sanctions policy and established its own legislative framework. At present, there are in excess of 16,500 sanctions imposed on Russian individuals and legal entities, approximately one-third of which were initiated by the United States. Prior to the commencement of the special military operation, the United States and its partner countries commenced an increase in sanctions against Russia. However, since February 2022, the scale and velocity of sanctions imposed on Russia have reached unprecedented levels. Currently, the conflict between Russia and the West has reached a high point, and there are no signs of normalization. Sanction is one of the few escalation options available, but more radical escalation options have been exhausted. In response, Russia has consistently expanded its anti-sanctions measures. While these measures are not symmetrical to Western sanctions, the primary objective of adapting to the restrictions imposed by sanctions and potentially retaliating has been largely achieved. The further development of domestic, bilateral, and multilateral mechanisms to address sanctions will not only reinforce regional stability and security but also contribute to the stability and security of the international community.

Key Words: International Sanctions, Foreign policy, Russia – Ukraine conflict, Russia

“Misaligned Competition”: The New Dynamics of Major Powers’ Interactions in Central Asia **Zeng Xianghong and Wang Zihan**

Since the independence of Central Asian countries, the major extra-regional powers, namely Russia, the United States, and China, have engaged in a pattern of “misaligned competition” in their interactions in Central Asia. The “misalignment” is

reflected in several key areas. Firstly, Russia, the United States and China hold disparate positions on Central Asia. Secondly, Russia has invested the most in Central Asia among the three countries, followed by China and the United States. Thirdly, in terms of influence in Central Asia, Russia is primarily engaged in politics and security, the United States in the social sphere, and China in the economic domain. The principal factors that have led to the formation of this pattern are as follows: Firstly, Russia, the United States, and China each have distinct strategic objectives with regard to Central Asia. Russia is attempting to regain its historical preeminence in Central Asia, the United States is dedicated to “containment, integration and shaping”, and China is focused on maintaining stability along its western border and advancing the “Belt and Road” initiative. Secondly, the perception of threats and opportunities in Central Asia differs between Russia, the United States, and China. Russia identifies a greater number of threats and opportunities in Central Asia than the United States, while China’s perception of these factors falls somewhere between the two. Thirdly, the three countries have disparately comparative advantages in Central Asia. Russia’s advantages are primarily historical, cultural, and economic, while the United States’ advantages are normative and institutional, as well as the presence of allies. China’s advantages are primarily economic. The “misaligned competition” pattern has maintained order and stability in Central Asia in the short term and has also enabled Central Asian countries to engage in “multi – balancing” diplomacy. In recent years, however, Russia, the United States, and China have increased their attention and investment in Central Asia. As a result, the degree of misalignment in their interactions is gradually decreasing. It seems inevitable that competition among the major powers in Central Asia will become increasingly fierce.

Key Words: “Misaligned Competition”, Great Power Competition, Central Asia, C5 +1, Cooperation between China and Central Asia

The Logic and Options of Middle Powers in Responding to the Interference of Major Powers: A Study Based on the Case of Arms Purchases

Zhang Qiping and Shen Zeyuan

In the context of competition between major powers, it is worthwhile to analyze how the group of middle powers responds to the threat of “taking sides” by the dominant power in the system. Prior research indicates that middle powers can maintain relative autonomy through strategic behaviors such as hedging, and they can also promote common norms that benefit themselves in multilateral settings, thereby restraining the behavior of major powers. Nevertheless, middle powers cannot always rely on their social identity to seek room for maneuver against major powers. In the context of bilateral relations, especially those involving mutual security concerns, middle powers must deal

with great power interference on their own. Among these, the arms trade has a clear domestic attribute on the demand side, but is inevitably highly instrumental on the supply side. This tension makes the arms purchase scenario quite representative for studying major power interference in the domestic affairs of middle powers. This paper constructs an analytical framework with national autonomy and arms – selling state support as the core variables to explain the decision – making logic of a group of middle powers to independently respond to interference by major powers. For countries engaged in military procurement, national autonomy initially affects the cost of rejecting interference, whereas the support of the arms – selling state affects the benefits of rejecting interference. The combination of the two leads to different perceptions and choices regarding costs and benefits. Analysis of different cases not only validates these arguments but also offers policy insights for China to enhance security cooperation with middle powers by resonating with their quest for autonomy, thereby forestalling potential interferences. As the strategic competition between China and the United States intensifies, it is imperative for China to ingeniously influence the internal affairs of other countries through political and economic instruments and direct the cohort of middle – power countries to cultivate optimistic expectations for alterations in the international power structure.

Key Words: Middle Power, Major Power Competition, Taking Sides, Arms Purchases

Limited Participation in Alliance: Strategic Choices of Belarus in the Russia – Ukraine Conflict **Zhou You**

Belarus’s strategic choice in the Russia – Ukraine conflict mainly manifests itself in limited participation. On the one hand, Belarus supports Russia’s position in the conflict and has, in fact, become a participant. On the other hand, Belarus refuses to send troops, does not recognize the newly occupied Russian territory, and participates in conflict mediation, which also reflects a certain neutrality. The objective of this article is to elucidate the logic of Belarus’s actions as a small country in an asymmetrical alliance with Russia in the context of the Russia – Ukraine conflict. To this end, the article reflects on the theory of the autonomy – security trade – off, and explores the limited involvement of Belarus in the Russia – Ukraine conflict. The autonomous – security trade off model focuses on the problem of alliance formation. It posits that members of an alliance trade off their autonomous interests against their security interests, leading small states to often choose to follow a larger state for security. This paper suggests that small states also pursue their own autonomous interests. In the context of alliance maintenance, the level of dependence of small states on larger states is not static and their policy choices continue to be adjusted in response to changes in various conditions. The autonomy of

small states is affected by a number of factors, including the level of security threats, the level of power, the extent of identification with the alliance, and the availability of alternative options. In this case, the key factors affecting Belarus's foreign policy decisions are changes in the security environment and the availability of alternative coalition partners. Since the 2020 presidential election, the internal and external security environment in Belarus has deteriorated significantly. Its external security has been further undermined by the Russia – Ukraine conflict, and it has lost the option of hedging between Russia and the West, causing Belarus to return to the track of following Russia. Concurrently, Belarus, confronted with a diminution in its autonomy in alliance diplomacy, endeavored to prevent further losses of interests through involvement, and was particularly disinclined to establish a Russia – Belarus alliance at the expense of its sovereignty. Consequently, Belarus utilized its diplomatic capital to mediate between Russia and Ukraine and resolve the Wagner crisis, as well as engaging in far – arc diplomacy to obtain autonomous interests, thereby reiterating its neutrality.

Key Words: Belarus, Russia – Ukraine Conflict, Small State Alliance Diplomacy, Asymmetric Alliance, Autonomy – Security Trade

The Direction and Impact of Geopolitical Games in the Arctic Against the Background of the Russia – Ukraine Conflict Zhang Jiajia and Guo Peiqing

After the outbreak of the Russia – Ukraine conflict, the geopolitical spillover effect rapidly manifested itself in the Arctic region. Consequently, the Arctic policies of Arctic countries, led by the United States and Russia, have become “geopoliticized”, the geopolitical value of the Arctic region has been re – emphasized and geopolitical competition in the Arctic has intensified. The eight Arctic countries have initiated a series of new strategic deployments in the region. Firstly, the political and military “new cold war” situation, with the United States leading the “NATOization” of the Arctic and strategically squeezing Russia, while Russia is accelerating the construction of a strategic defense line in the northern region; secondly, extreme economic pressure and countermeasures, with the United States and the West increasing sanctions against Russia's Arctic gas projects, and Russia countering by accelerating the economic countermeasures. Thirdly, institutional “circleization”: the formation of the A7 compelled Russia to “withdraw from the group” in the Arctic governance mechanism, prompting Russia to seek partnerships with countries outside the region. There is significant divergence within the international community regarding the future direction of the Arctic governance mechanism. Fourthly, the “pan – security” of low – profile political issues have intensified competition in the fields of Arctic minerals and shipping channels. However, in terms of “motivation – ability”, “cost – benefit”, and international consensus, there is an upper limit to geopolitical competition in the Arctic. Arctic

governance will continue to promote “sectoral cooperation”. In the future, Arctic governance will coexist with turbulence. The “Arctic exception” will be challenged, cooperation mechanisms will face divisions, and extra – regional states will welcome new opportunities to participate in Arctic affairs.

Key Words: Arctic Governance, Arctic Council, Arctic Sea Route, Russia – Ukraine Conflict, Geopolitics, US – Russia relations

Legislation and Codification of Digital Governance: Construction Path and Practical Characteristics in Russia

Liu Hongyan and Kharitonova

As a country undergoing digital transformation, Russia has witnessed the pervasive integration of digital applications across all facets of business and public administration. This trend has not only prompted a comprehensive reorientation and transformation of Russia’s extant legal theory and system but has also facilitated the development of a legal system with digital regulation at its core. Russia is currently engaged in efforts to codify the digital domain in order to align it with the evolving demands of public life and public management in the digital age. The government is pursuing the digitalization process through legal means, striving to strike a balance between safeguarding citizens’ rights and interests and maintaining social order. This process entails not only the amendment and consolidation of existing legal provisions but also the establishment of legal regulation in areas not yet covered by traditional legal systems. These include data ownership, platform liability, and artificial intelligence governance. Accordingly, the codification of Russia’s digital economy governance laws and the adjustment and implementation of governance measures ensure that the integration of emerging technologies can proceed in a standardized and legalized framework, thereby effectively addressing various social and management challenges arising from digitalization. Despite ongoing theoretical debate surrounding the boundaries of legislation and law enforcement, including the relationship between state control and market freedom, and the balancing of digitization with human rights protection, the codification of Russia’s digital economy is an irreversible process that will continue to advance in a gradual and unwavering manner.

Key Words: Russia, Digitization, Digital Economy Governance, Digital Law, Digital Codification

External Crisis, Government Support and the Second Transformation of Russian Agriculture

Xiao Huizhong

At the outset of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian reformers initiated a comprehensive restructuring of the country’s agricultural sector. This entailed the privatization of farmland, the reform of the ownership system of state – owned and

collective farms, and the withdrawal of the state from the management of agriculture. The first round of transformation of Russian agriculture commenced and concluded in the 1990s. The most notable outcome was the advent of medium – sized private farms. However, this did not result in a resurgence of agricultural production or a revitalization of the rural economy. Instead, agricultural output declined considerably, necessitating the importation of substantial quantities of meat, milk, and sugar. Consequently, food security has emerged as a pivotal social and political concern in Russia. With Vladimir Putin becoming the country’s leader at the beginning of the 21st century, Russia embarked on the second agricultural transformation, which remains ongoing. In this transformation, the government re – engaged with agriculture and facilitated the establishment of new large – scale production entities as a means of addressing food security concerns. Currently, Russian agriculture has undergone a notable revitalization, with substantial improvements in food self – sufficiency, and the country has become a prominent agricultural exporter in the international market. The emergence and growth of large – scale production entities, namely agricultural holdings, represents a pivotal aspect of the second wave of agricultural transformation in Russia. The opportunities presented by various external crises, as well as the Russian government’s preference for and support of large agricultural production entities, are pivotal factors in the ascendance of agricultural holding companies. These companies are the cornerstone of Russia’s trajectory towards becoming a prominent agricultural country. As China and Russia’s agricultural cooperation continues to intensify, it is imperative for domestic academia and industry to direct attention towards and undertake rigorous study of the phenomenon of Russian agricultural holding companies. China is exploring the path to become a strong agricultural country, and the experience and lessons learned by Russian agricultural holdings during their growth process are of significant reference value.

Key Words: Russian Agricultural Transformation, Russian Agricultural Holdings, External Crisis, Government Support