

SUMMARIES

“Zeitgeist”, “Zeitenwende” and European Transition: A Long Cycle of Historical Investigation

Zhou Mu and Zhou Hong

In response to global shifts, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz proposed the slogan “Zeitenwende” (epochal turning point) and outlined the German government’s countermeasures. This raises critical questions. Is the notion of an “epochal turning point” conceptually precise? What are its concrete manifestations and underlying principles? Can this framework adequately explain the diverse changes and social turbulence observed in Europe? By conducting a long – term historical analysis of European social transformations in the modern era, this study integrates the concept of “Zeitgeist” (spirit of the times) into the examination of epochal transitions, validating the dialectical interplay between productive forces, production relations, economic base, and superstructure as articulated by classical Marxist theorists in shaping Europe’s social transitions and modernization trajectory. The research reveals that during European social transformations, overlapping phases emerge—termed “wrinkle periods”—where conflicting temporal norms and ideologies collide, or “interregnum periods” marked by the absence of dominant paradigms. These phases are often characterized by complex social disarray. The study posits that Zeitgeist serves as a guiding force for societal progress, with its evolution signaling epochal shifts. Building on this framework, the paper analyzes post – World War II European social transitions, arguing that Europe entered a “welfare capitalism” era, where ideals such as “social equity” and “civil rights” became consensus – driven principles, fostering balanced economic and social development. However, rapid advancements in technology and global markets have disrupted this equilibrium, propelling Europe into a new transitional phase. Concurrent market anomie and government inefficacy, coupled with fragmented ideologies advocating partial interests, reflect the absence of a renewed Zeitgeist. The decline of mainstream political parties and dominant paradigms has starkly contrasted with accelerated productive forces and regressive ideological trends. These phenomena underscore a critical lag in Europe’s production relations and superstructure relative to its productive forces.

Key Words: Centennial Transformation, European Transition, European – Style Modernization, Welfare Capitalism, “Zeitgeist”

Preference Coordination, Network Effects, and the Institutionalization of BRICS Cooperation

Zhu Jiejin and Liu Yingchen

As a leading bloc of the Global South, BRICS countries engage in cooperation

across diverse issue areas, yet exhibit significant variations in their levels of institutionalization. Why does BRICS cooperation exhibit high institutionalization in some issue areas, moderate in others, and low in others? The institutionalization level of BRICS cooperation is jointly shaped by the degree of preference coordination among core major powers within the bloc and the network effects inherent to specific issue areas. In development finance, the high preference coordination between China and India, coupled with weak network effects in this domain, results in a high level of institutionalization. In financial safety nets, while China and Brazil achieve substantial preference coordination, the strong network effects in this area lead to moderate institutionalization. Conversely, in traditional cross-border payments, the low preference coordination between China and Russia, combined with strong network effects, yields low institutionalization. Exploring the variation in BRICS institutionalization and its causes provides theoretical insights into the logic of BRICS institutional development and practical guidance for advancing the institutionalization of an expanded BRICS. On one hand, the expanded BRICS mechanism must intensify efforts to align member states' preferences, reconcile divergences, and identify compromises. On the other hand, it should adhere to incremental institutionalization, prioritizing cooperation in issue areas with weaker network effects to amplify its role in reforming the global governance system.

Key Words: BRICS Cooperation, Preference Coordination, Network Effects, Level of Institutionalization, Development Finance

Motivations, Cooperative Preferences and Implications of Belarus' Accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Deng Zhou and Xue Xiaoyu

Belarus' proactive pursuit of membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) since 2022 has been driven by three strategic imperatives—national security guarantees, diplomatic diversification, and economic development needs—with the SCO's capacity to supply corresponding public goods forming a supply-demand nexus that underpins its accession decision. Historically and contemporaneously, Belarus prioritizes interconnectivity infrastructure, agricultural and food security collaboration, and “seamless” security partnerships within the SCO framework. While accession may enhance Belarus' international standing and strategic environment, it risks short-term tensions with Western states; for the SCO, enlargement strengthens global influence and expands cooperative potential but poses challenges to its internal cohesion and operational efficiency. At regional and international levels, Belarus' membership in the SCO will contribute to maintaining the overall stability of the Eurasian strategic security architecture, safeguarding regional food security through stabilized supply chains, and advancing the establishment of a new international order characterized by greater equity and rationality. In response to the potential impacts of Belarus' SCO accession, China

should adopt a proactive approach by strengthening bilateral relations with Belarus, promoting multifaceted cooperation under the SCO framework and facilitating the organization's stable development. This strategic orientation will enable China to effectively seize emerging opportunities, systematically address associated challenges, and ensure the SCO's steady and sustained growth.

Key Words: Belarus, SCO Enlargement, Security Cooperation, Cross – Border Transport Cooperation, Agricultural Cooperation, New International Order

Multi-Speed Europe and the Micro-Level Integration Strategies of Central and Eastern European States **Ju Hao**

While the integration strategies of EU member states constitute a critical issue in European integration, scholarly attention to their micro-level policy approaches remains insufficient compared to macro-political analyses. This study examines the micro-level integration strategies of 11 Central and Eastern European (CEE) EU members through their stances on multi-speed Europe, revealing that European integration serves dual purposes for these states: as an instrumental means and a normative end. Their strategies are jointly shaped by cost-benefit calculations (instrumental attribute) and normative alignment (teleological attribute), both influenced by EU-level constraints, domestic political processes, and international strategic considerations. Divergent Europeanization levels, distinctive domestic political processes, and differentiated foreign strategic orientations explain CEE states' varied policy positions and strategic choices on multi-speed integration. Amidst profound transformations unseen in a century, European integration faces renewed challenges: the protracted Russia – Ukraine conflict and the Trump administration's return to power may further reshape CEE strategies through tripartite (EU – domestic – international) pathways. Although future adjustments in CEE micro-strategies and multi-speed Europe positions are probable, the substantial divergence in their strategic approaches is unlikely to diminish.

Key Words: Multi-Speed Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, Micro-Level Integration Strategies, Europeanization Levels, European Integration

The Crisis Situation and Logic Linkage of Food, Oil and Finance in the Context of the Russia – Ukraine Conflict **Xu Zhenwei**

Food constitutes the fundamental sustenance for human survival, petroleum serves as the driving force for economic development, and finance represents the core of modern economic systems, with intricate interconnected dynamics existing among these three domains. Food security inherently depends on energy stability, while international financial markets exhibit volatility influenced by both sectors. The interactive mechanisms within financial, petroleum, and grain markets create a tripartite

interdependence where fluctuations in one sector inevitably propagate to the others. The Russia – Ukraine conflict has significantly amplified and visually manifested these systemic linkages. The warfare and Western economic sanctions against Russia have severely disrupted global supply chains for both agricultural products and crude oil, triggering dramatic price surges that speculative capital has further exacerbated. Concurrently, the U. S. Federal Reserve’s interest rate hikes have intensified turbulence in international financial markets. The escalation of this conflict has precipitated a tripartite global crisis encompassing energy, food, and finance, fracturing global industrial chains while positioning the United States, particularly its financial capital, as primary beneficiaries of these crises. Conversely, developing nations with relatively weaker comprehensive capabilities have borne disproportionate impacts, with food insecurity emerging as the paramount crisis for low-income countries. This situation delivers a strategic imperative to all nations: contemporary international competition has transcended military domains to encompass comprehensive contests across energy, food, and financial sectors. Analysis of food crises must incorporate energy and financial dimensions, as rising oil prices escalate production, transportation, and processing costs in agriculture while simultaneously incentivizing U. S. bioenergy development—diverting substantial grain stocks into petroleum-substitute industrial uses, thereby artificially exacerbating food shortages. Financially, U. S. monetary policies including quantitative easing and interest rate adjustments have destabilized global commodity markets, inducing significant price volatility in both agricultural and energy sectors, with financial speculation further amplifying price escalations.

Key Words: Russia–Ukraine Conflict, Food Crisis, Oil Crisis, Financial Crisis, Global Industrial Chain

The Construction of Kazakhstan’s National Identity from the Perspective of Ontological Security

Yang Bo and Chang Xianmin

Existing studies on ontological security in international relations predominantly adhere to state-centric assumptions, a theoretical paradigm that is insufficient to explain Kazakhstan’s ontological security dynamics. Grounded in Anthony Giddens’ sociological theory of ontological security, this paper deconstructs the relational essence of ontological security, positing Kazakhstan as a quintessential state undergoing societal transformation that grapples with ontological insecurity stemming from indeterminate national identity. The analysis reveals that despite protracted societal debates over national identity, Kazakhstan has avoided the “securitization trap” of identity politics due to robust state–society interactions, effective dialogue mechanisms, and negotiated consensus-building. These processes provide flexible spaces for citizens to negotiate identity interests and pursue ontological security, enabling sustained stability and rapid development over 30 years of independence, and this highly heterogeneous society—

marked by significant cultural, linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity—has maintained overarching harmony and unity despite lacking consolidated collective identity. Kazakhstan's nation-building progresses incrementally by balancing diverse identity claims while safeguarding ontological security for all stakeholders. Whether this equilibrium persists amid evolving domestic and geopolitical pressures warrants ongoing scrutiny.

Key Words: Kazakhstan, Ontological Security, National Identity, Social Relations, State Building

The Historical Evolution of Geopolitical Theory and Geopolitical Competition in the Networked Era

Bo Rongkang

As a significant component of international relations theory, geopolitical theory exerts a profound influence on the geostrategies employed by dominant powers over the course of a particular historical period. Time remains indispensable to theoretical frameworks: throughout its evolution, geopolitical theory has manifested three paradigms—offensive (conflict-oriented), competitive-cooperative (rivalry-balancing), and symbiotic (interdependence-driven). Geographical spatial characteristics determine the efficacy of military force, thereby influencing the intensity of geopolitical competition, while dominant production relations define wealth accumulation methods and shape states' objectives and tactical preferences. In physical geographical environments, zero-sum dynamics prevail, with offensive theories dominating; in hybrid geographical environments (where military utility diminishes), competitive and cooperative logics coexist; in virtual environments, the dissolution of spatial constraints and the Internet's inherent openness reposition information accumulation/distribution as central to economic development, rendering symbiotic geopolitical theory the future trajectory. The intricate geopolitical landscape confronted by states engaging in territorial competition in the networked era necessitates the adoption of a unified geopolitical perspective. This requires proactive engagement in physical geographical environments, dynamic initiatives in multidimensional geographical contexts, and determined advancement within virtual domains. The vision of a community with a shared future in cyberspace embodies Chinese wisdom for digital governance, positing that cyberspace's developmental trajectory should be jointly determined by the global community. This paradigm emphasizes development jointly advanced, security collectively safeguarded, governance collaboratively participated in, and outcomes equitably shared.

Key Words: Geopolitical Theory, Historical Evolution, Geographical Spatial Characteristics, Dominant Production Relations, Community of Shared Future in Cyberspace