

Beijing Forum 2019 The Changing World Order (IV)

On the afternoon of November 3, 2019, the second half of the last session of panel “The Changing World Order” was held in the lecture hall of King Abdulaziz Public Library–Peking University branch. Professor Tang Shiqi from the School of International Studies at PKU moderated the discussion, and the four speakers on the panel were all his colleagues.

Professor Wang Yizhou presented a speech titled “Some Thoughts on the Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics.” He said major power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics started from 2003, when then vice president of the Central Party School, Zheng Bijian, first came up with the idea of China’s peaceful rise. He referred back to the history of PRC diplomacy, including the revolution-centric diplomacy during the Mao era, and the development-oriented diplomacy after reform and opening-up. After President Xi Jinping took office, major power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics has made China a global power with a global presence for the first time. However, China is restricted by many internal weaknesses, in particular, the extensive decision-making regime and inadequate governing capability. Chinese foreign policy needs to be wiser and more cautious.

The second presentation was given by Professor Zhang Xiaoming; his topic was “China’s Rise, the International Order and the World Order”. He noted that the world order is the order of human society, and it represents (a) order among nations; (b) domestic order; and (c) trans-national order, especially that of non-state actors. International order is order among nations. It dates back to the premodern era before that Westphalia system and after WW2, when a global scale international order emerged for the first time. In terms of China’s role in the international order, Zhang shared his insights: (a) China’s rise is a long and ongoing process, it kicked off from 1943 and accelerated after reform and opening-up in late 1970s; (b) China’s rise is part of “rise of the rest”, however it is the most special one. Compared with India and Russia, China is essentially distinct from Western countries; (c) China’s rise is a material or economic rise—it has little to do with ideology. Zhang said, people tend to exaggerate China’s shock to the international order. He expressed his view that domestic changes in Western countries are the most important factor.

The third speaker was Professor Zhang Haibin, who delivered a presentation titled “China and

the World Climate Governance: Focusing on International Climate Negotiations”. Zhang referred back to key concepts and the development of global climate governance, pointing out that the principles of global climate governance have undergone two major changes. The common factors in “common but differentiated responsibilities” have been increasingly strengthened, and the “difference” is gradually shifting from the dichotomy between developed and developing countries to the specific distinction based on the capabilities of countries; the second is the increasingly close relationship between the principles of climate change and sustainable development. In addition, he mentioned that current global climate governance faces many challenges, and China is trying to play a leading role. China will guide global climate governance by actively contributing ideas, vigorously promoting climate negotiations, implementing domestic policies, and promoting South-South climate cooperation.

The last presentation was a talk by Professor Zhai Kun. He noted that the BRI was initiated by China. It will have a profound impact on the current international order and world order. Zhai proposed that the BRI is a long-term national strategy and a strategy for coordinating internal and external affairs in the new era; therefore, it needs to connect China and the rest of the world. In addition, he also mentioned that US politicians and strategists are concerned about the BRI and regard it as a threat. But, at the same time, it should also be noted that the BRI has attracted many stakeholders, especially international organizations; therefore, it has great potential for cooperative endeavors.