Abstracts

The Adjustment of the United States' Strategy in the Middle East: Environment Shaping and Order Rebuilding

Tang Zhichao

Abstract: Since the end of the Cold War, successive US governments have continued to adjust their Middle East strategy, which is closely related to the changes in the global pattern, the challenges faced by the US global strategy, and the geopolitical changes in the Middle East. The essence of US Middle East strategy is to maintain the US hegemony in the Middle East and to serve and obey the US global strategy. For now, shaping the strategic environment at the global and regional levels in order to "compete with China and limit Russia" is the central task of the Biden administration in promoting strategic competition among great powers. Specifically in the Middle East, due to the continuous strategic contraction of the United States from the Middle East in the past decade, the dominant position of the United States in the Middle East has been seriously weakened, and the "Middle East in the post－American era" has begun to emerge. China and Russia, regarded by the United States as its main global competitors, as well as the main regional challenger Iran, are expanding their influence in the Middle East, while the major allies and partners of the United States in the region are increasingly worried about the United States leaving the Middle East, and the strategic autonomy characterized by separation from the United States is constantly developing. To this end, the United States has established a new Middle East strategy dominated by strategic competition, and for the first time, the main goal of the Middle East strategy is to contain the influence of China and Russia in the Middle East. The strategy takes rebuilding US regional leadership, reshaping regional rules, rebuilding US－regional Allies and partnerships, rebuilding the regional security system, and reshaping regional supply chains and value chains as its main contents, and reshaping the strategic environment in the Middle East to prevent China and Russia from "filling the power vacuum" as its main task. The United States is shaping the strategic environment in the Middle East and promoting strategic competition among major powers in order to maintain the American－led Middle East order formed in the past

three decades. The series of measures introduced by the US may seem new, but in essence, it is "old wine in new bottle", with obvious Cold War mentality, bloc politics and zero－sum game color, which is not conducive to the development and stability of the Middle East, and it is doomed to be difficult to achieve its strategic goals.

Key words：US Middle East strategy; Biden Administration; strategic competition; environment shaping; Middle East order

The Rising Geopolitical Competition for Critical Minerals in Africa: Motivation, Characteristics and Impact

Zhou Yuyuan

Abstract：Critical minerals are the key to energy transformation and green transformation, which are crucial to a country's economic development, national security and international competitiveness. This reality is shaping the current competition among major powers in Africa with plentiful resources. Western companies are still dominating the mining of African minerals, including critical minerals. China's investment share in African minerals is still low, and it is relatively concentrated in critical minerals such as cobalt, cooper and lithium etc. However, China has built strong advantage in global critical mineral supply chain by being the center of global refining, trade and market of critical minerals. The ongoing geopolitical competition for Africa's critical minerals can be defined with three points. The first is the systemic competition, which is manifested in the competition between U. S. – led Critical Minerals Alliance and China's critical mineral supply chain system. The second is differential competition, which results from the strategic differences between China and the West, as well as the difference among the West such as the U. S. and the European Union. The third is instrumental competition, the profound phenomenon of which is the rising weaponization and politicalization of critical minerals. The competition among major powers is creating a complex relationship between major powers and Africa, and exerting multiple impacts on supply chain security, Africa's development, and China－Africa cooperation. This change has brought new and uncertain challenges to China－Africa cooperation, but it also highlights the necessity of strategic coordination between China and Africa.

Key words：Africa's critical minerals; great power competition; energy transition; Critical Minerals Alliance; supply chain

The Geopolitical Shift of the European Union's Policy Readjustment towards Africa

Jin Ling

Abstract：Under the changing geopolitical context, the European Union（EU）has been readjusting its African policy. It is committed to realizing the geopolitical transformation of European – African relationship to serve both its own pragmatic interests and geopolitical gains by joining great power game. China – US geopolitical tensions, the Covid – 19 and the Ukraine crisis reshaped the EU's worldview, giving the EU a structural impetus to adjust its Africa policy. The EU itself is trying to regain competitive advantage through green and digital dual transformation, which is the endogenous momentum for its Africa policy adjustment. The outbreak of Ukraine crisis in 2022 accelerated its readjustment policy process towards Africa. An important dimension of the EU's current policy change towards Africa is back to its geopolitical perspective to see Africa's role and hopes to focus on the key raw materials needed for its own green and digital transformation by rebalancing the relationship between aid, investment and trade. As an important testing ground for the geopolitical transformation of EU's own foreign policy, it also hopes to strengthen its security presence in Africa, since its peace and security policy towards Africa faces a crossroads. At present, the adjustment of the EU's African policy is facing a series of deep – seated challenges, including the paradox of values and interests, the asymmetry of each other's strength and interests, and the EU's own expectation – capacity gaps in its Africa policy.
Key words：EU – Africa relationship；geopolitics；Ukraine crisis；partnership；values

Beyond the Development Aid：The Transformation of EU's Strategy towards the Sahel Region

Zhang Kai

Abstract：With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the establishment of the European External Action Service, the EU introduced the Sahel Strategy in 2011, attempting to use a comprehensive approach to intervene the internal affairs of the Sahel region, expanding Europe's security borders to the Sahel region, and increasing the EU's influence in Africa. However, the excessive focus on security, especially the short – term goal of curbing immigration and refugees, has prevented the EU from effectively balancing different policy tools, and the EU's comprehensive approach exhibits a clear "securitization" characteristic. Although the use of military security measures has to some extent curbed the flow of refugees to

Europe through the Sahel region， it has not made the Sahel region more secure. On the contrary， the frequent occurrence of military coups， the spread of terrorism， and the intensification of violent conflicts reflect that the Sahel region still faces a severe security situation. On the basis of analyzing the situation in the Sahel region and summarizing the experiences and lessons learned from the past decade， the EU introduced a new version of the Sahel Strategy in 2021， emphasizing the need to focus on governance when applying an integrated approach to address the root causes of conflicts in the Sahel region. From the perspective of policy narrative， the EU＇s Sahel strategy presents a transformation centered on governance. However， from a practical perspective， in the face of the prolonged Ukraine crisis and the intensification of power politics， the EU emphasizes the importance of strategic autonomy， and its intervention in the internal affairs of the Sahel region reflects a clear geopolitical competition among major powers. The zero－sum thinking of the EU makes it difficult to be a solver of the Sahel＇s challenges， but rather a part of the problems there.

Key words：European Union policy towards Africa; EU＇s Sahel Strategy; "Council Conclusions on the European Union＇s Integrated Strategy in the Sahel"; security governance; comprehensive approach

Theoretical Paradigm and Practice on Development Communication in Africa

Zhang Yanqiu & Chen Yuan

Abstract：Development has always been a core issue for African countries. Reviewing African countries＇ past practices in tackling developmental problems via mass media will generate a more comprehensive understanding of African development issues and a dialogue in media communication between China and Africa. African countries have accumulated rich practical experience on the decades－long journey of exploring development communication. And they have also undergone the changes of discourse context and research approach in the field of development communication， among which the modernization paradigm， the critical paradigm and the empowerment paradigm of participatory communication have injected impetus into the development communication of Africa. However， due to government＇s failure to form a cooperative relationship with media， development communication didn＇t gain the expected effect for a long period of time， especially during the time when Western free media system was introduced into Africa after the Cold War， which made its development deviate from its original vision. Therefore， scholars from African continents have reflected and explored both in theory and practice on

development communication. As a result，practice including development journalism and constructive journalism represents an important milestone as African countries try to seek a "middle way" for development communication. Looking forward，the future of African development communication lies in not only reshaping its media system and liberal journalistic concept from a macro perspective，but also in government's building a cooperative and symbiotic relationship with the media，to reinvent a path that is in line with African theories and practices in the era when new technology greatly empowers media transmission.

Keywords：development communication；development journalism；African media；modernization；participatory communication

The Narrative Paradigm of China's Communication to Africa in the Context of the New Era

Li Yujie

Abstract：The competition for discourse and soft power in international relations is increasingly manifested as narrative competence. As an important part of international relations，China – Africa relation is also full of multiple narratives，and Chinese and Western media have set different narratives of China – Africa relations. Although there are a few similarities in the narratives of Chinese and Western media when telling the story of China – Africa relations，the differences far outweigh the similarities. For example，the tone of China's media is friendship and cooperation between China and Africa，while the Western media tell a confrontation and conflict version，showing distinct features of narrative. The former sets the narrative of friendship and cooperation and prefers the grand narrative as well as traditional positive narrative，the latter chooses the expired colonial scheme，the multiple particularity narratives，and the abnormal negative narrative. When Chinese media are facing challenges，including fierce competition of discourse on China – Africa relations in the field of international public opinion，barriers African audiences encountering in receiving Chinese narrative，the narrative update to reflect the changing China – Africa relations and so on，the innovation of China's narrative paradigm based on the reality，value and interaction would be the key points of telling the story of China – Africa relations well following the narrative rationality.

Key words：Xi Jinping Thought on Culture；China – Africa relations；international communication capacity；Chinese media；Western media；narrative features；narrative rationality

Practical Exploration of Intercultural Communication between China and Africa from the Perspective of Cultural Identity Theory
Wei Baige

Abstract：With the continuous deepening of globalization and the rapid development of modern information technology，intercultural communication has become a fascinating cultural landscape in today's world. The process of intercultural communication can be summarized into four dimensions：intercultural understanding，intercultural respect，intercultural interaction and intercultural identity. On the whole，China's intercultural communication with Africa in the new era has been expanding in terms of subjects，enriching in contents，expanding in channels，and gradually increasing in audiences，with remarkable results. At the same time，China's intercultural communication with Africa also faces a series of problems and challenges：at the cognitive level，cultural differences affect intercultural understanding between China and Africa；at the attitudinal level，cultural centrism affects intercultural respect between China and Africa；at the interactive level，cultural imperialism affects intercultural interaction between China and Africa；and at the identity level，the "West is strong and East is weak" international communication pattern affects intercultural identity between China and Africa. In this context，China needs to strengthen the construction of an autonomous knowledge system for China's international communication with Africa，so as to promote cultural integration and mutual understanding between China and Africa；innovate in agenda－setting and accelerate the construction of a narrative system for China's international communication with Africa；smooth the links of international interactions，so as to minimize the discounting of China－Africa cultures；and construct the interculturality of China－Africa community of destiny in order to realize interculturality on the ground，and thus promote the recognition of China－Africa values，identities and the community of destiny.

Key words：China－Africa relations；intercultural communication；intercultural identity；cultural difference；cultural commonality；cultural centrism；cultural imperialism