

“Systematic Rival” From the Perspective of Philosophy of Property System

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At present, the world is undergoing accelerating changes unseen in a century. With the United States regarding China as a strategic competitor, China-EU relations have become the core of national and global governance. For this reason, we use the basic theory and tools of Philosophy of Property System to clarify the EU's characterization of China and accordingly propose the method of judgment and the principle of response. From this, we can get three basic cognitions of “systematic rivalry”, namely mutual exclusion of common cognition (Model A), mutual exclusion and cooperation of personality cognition (Model B), and cooperation of historical cognition (Model C). In order to steadily grasp the nature of “systematic rival” and make it operable, three basic cognitive models (AB, AC, BC, ABC, etc.) are combined, and a comprehensive judgment (ABC+model) is made to adapt to the supranational sovereignty characteristics of the EU. It is believed that the nature of “systematic rivalry” in the “trinity” refers to the main aspects of competition between China and Europe. Therefore, there are three principles for the Philosophy of Property System of “systematic rival”: first, maintain the situation of competition and cooperation; second, there is no fixed mode of competition and cooperation; and third, temporary confrontation and complementarity will lead to new competition and cooperation.

Keywords: systemic rival, national governance, global governance, philosophy of property system

Foreword

The mutual characterization of States, especially the major Powers, is a direct reflection of the changing pattern of governance and the future direction of the world. Since 2017, General Secretary Xi (2017, p. 382) Jinping has repeatedly discussed on various occasions the great changes in the international order, the international situation is undergoing unprecedented changes (Xi, 2017, p. 415), and the world is experiencing a great change that has not been seen in a hundred years (Xi, 2020, p. 112), etc. Recently, he pointed out that:

At present, the world's great change that has not been seen in a hundred years has been accelerating, and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has entered the critical period, and the risks and challenges that we are facing have increased significantly. (Xi, 2022, p. 533)

and that: “It is unrealistic to want to have a peaceful day and not want to struggle. It is unrealistic to think of a peaceful life and not to want to fight.” (Xi, 2022, p. 533). At the same time, the Trump administration put forward

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America First (chinadaily.com, 2017), and in 2017 the U.S. National Security Strategy called China a “strategic competitor” (strategic competitor), which the Biden administration has continued. In the context of the competition between China and the United States, the European Union, a powerful “normative” force (normative power) plays a unique role. “China is now the EU’s second largest trading partner, after the United States, while the EU is China’s largest trading partner.” According to the EU,

In different policy areas, China is at the same time a partner with whom the EU shares common objectives, a negotiating partner with whom the EU needs to seek a balance of interests, an economic competitor in pursuit of technological leadership, and a “systemic rival” advocating an alternative governance model. (state.gov, n.d.)

It can be seen that the EU adopts a trinity characterization of China. However, the Biden administration also claims that its strategy towards China is a trinity of “investment, synergy, and competition” (state.gov, n.d.), but in the “U.S. Strategic Approach to the People’s Republic of China” it is expressed as: the long-term strategic competition between our two systems (andrewerickson.com, 2020). Despite the same “Trinity” characterization of China, the relationship between Europe and the United States and China is clearly different. Therefore, some in the academic community believe that “systemic rival” should be translated as “institutional rival” rather than “systematic rival” such as NATO or the United States (“systematic rival”). Due to the weakening of Russia, which has lost its strength as a traditional rival of the United States after the Soviet Union, China, the United States, and Europe have become the forces that dominate the current landscape and the future of humanity. In this context, the “systemic rival” relationship between China and Europe has risen to a central position in national and global governance, and must be clearly recognized. To this end, we have clarified it with the help of the basic theories and tools of the philosophy of property system (Chang, 2019, p. 82), and have therefore proposed a method of judgment and principles for dealing with it.

Basic Cognition of “Systemic Rival” from the Philosophy of Property System

The issue of state-to-state relations has been studied in a variety of ways, either through the use of historical metaphors such as the Thucydides Trap, or by attributing it to the nature of institutional competition, or by starting from the theories of the state such as those of Marx and Engels, Marx and Noth, Bazell, Olson, etc., or by combining econometrics, numerical modeling, and the use of computers. Similarly, “systemic rivalry” can only be clarified with the help of certain tools, just as the distinction between day and night can only be realized with the help of time, which is not just 24 hours but the entire astronomical and geographic system, including the year, month, and day. The philosophy of property is to “systemically rival” what time is to night and day. Of course, if “systemic rival” can be located in the field of property philosophy, then “systemic rival”, “systematic rival”, “strategic rival”, and “strategic rival” can be located in the field of property philosophy. If “systemic rivalry”, “trinity characterization of China”, and “strategic competitor” can be resolved in the context of the philosophy of property, it is very important for research and decision-making.

The current discussion of “systemic rivalry” can only be a vague characterization. In spite of the efforts made by some members of the academic community, it is not easy to clarify the meaning of the term itself. The results obtained through Baidu translation are: systemic rival, systemic rival; systematic rival, systemic rival. The root combination “system rival” is also translated as “system rival”. To further explore the nuances of the two, “systemic” (affecting an entire system), “systematic” (1. characterized by order and planning, 2. of or relating to taxonomy), the former focused on entire, the latter on characterization and taxonomy, and the suffix “-atic” means

“having the nature of, belonging to”. Therefore, the former emphasizes the whole while the latter emphasizes nature. From this point of view, the translations of “systemic rival” and “systematic rival” are not completely consistent with the original meaning of the English language but rather an approximate translation from the familiar domestic discourse system, which is obviously insufficient for scientific research and decision-making. Instead, it is an approximate translation from the domestic discourse system that we are familiar with, and it is obviously insufficient for scientific research and decision-making on the basis of it.

The philosophy of property is the appropriate tool for clarifying “systematic rivalry”. The theory of fundamental social contradictions is the central part of the materialist conception of history, which focuses on relations of production. Marx stated that relations of production and property relations are synonymous and that property relations are the legal term for relations of production (Marx & Engels, 2012, pp. 2-3). It is evident that the object of the materialist conception of history is economic production or legal property. It is in this sense that Marx wrote his masterpiece, *Capital*, because capital, i.e., property, exploits wage labor (Marx & Engels, 2012, pp. 414-415). However, Marx and Engels’ angle of study was human society, thus setting the realization of communism on the basis of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie as a whole by the working class as a whole, with the slogan of the Communist Manifesto, “Proletarians of the world, unite!” (Marx & Engels, 2012, p. 435). Marx and Engels argued for the inevitable demise of capitalism and the inevitable triumph of communism, but the breakthrough of socialism in practice was accomplished by Lenin. The founding of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic was the fulfillment of the theory of the proletarian revolution that the socialist revolution was victorious in one country (Stalin, 1956, p. 322). But this theory of the triumph of one nation over several nations is clearly different from the triumph of socialism for all mankind, and the former can be considered a certain part and stage of the latter. It is clear from this that Lenin’s perspective had shifted from the human society of Marx and Engels to the state. Since then, the practice of socialism has been carried out primarily on a state-by-state basis, transforming the working class as a whole to overthrow the bourgeoisie as a whole into a competition between the socialist state and the capitalist state in the way it is governed. Socialism and capitalism have repeatedly fought each other over the course of a vast journey that began in 1917. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the serious twists and turns in China’s search for socialism confirm that “how to govern a completely new society like a socialist society has not been solved well in previous world socialisms.” (Xi, 2014, p. 91). General Secretary Xi’s assertion shows that the competition between socialism and capitalism has been transformed into a governance competition in the new era. And governance is not just at the national level; it encompasses human society at large and individuals at small. The European Union’s proposal of “systemic rivalry”, a competition for supranational sovereignty, is a case in point. Macron introduced the concept of “sovereign Europe” in his 2017 Sorbonne speech, but

European sovereignty derives from the member states and does not replace their sovereignty, which, if necessary, can be shared to make them stronger. European sovereignty does not mean isolation from the world, and it must and will continue to lead multilateralism. (europa.rs, 2018)

The philosophy of property develops on the basis of the materialist conception of history and has a stronger penetrating power. It believes that property is a person’s sphere of influence ((Chang, 2019 the so-called “systemic rival” can only be temporary, p. 82), and that a dispute over property is a dispute over a person’s sphere of influence. From the point of view of the individual, James Muller says: “A thing which is not connected with me, which is outside my sphere, a thing which is external to me, a thing under the domination of the forces of

nature, does not have the property attributes.” (Marx & Engels, 1996, p. 26). From the point of view of human society, Marx also said, “In order to produce, people enter into certain connections and relations, and it is only within the sphere of these social connections and social relations that there is their influence on nature, that there is production.” (Marx & Engels, 2012, p. 340). Therefore, the existence of property relations, or relations of production in the materialist conception of history, presupposes the existence of a human sphere of influence, that is, the existence of property. “People” in “people’s sphere of influence” refers to units such as “a person, a family, a group, a place, or even a country” (Huang, 1982, p. 156) as mentioned in the “Kiln Pair”, and so on. From the above comparison and analysis, it can be seen that the philosophy of property is not only in line with the basic principles of the materialist concept of history but also has a stronger penetration, applicable to all research perspectives from the individual to the human society, in line with the needs of the new era of competition in governance, and, of course, applicable to the study of the perspective of “systemic rivalry” in the European Union.

There are three basic perceptions of “systemic rivalry” that can be derived from the philosophy of property. The first is the common perception, i.e., the perception of “systemic rivalry” through the application of a basic structure that satisfies all research perspectives, from the individual to human society. This type of cognition, also known as three-dimensional cognition, corresponds to the three-dimensional property model. The three-dimensional property model considers property as a unity of property subjects, property objects, and property relations. This is consistent with the formulation of productive forces, relations of production (property relations, economic base), and the superstructure from the perspective of human society. From the perspective of “sovereign Europe”, it is mutually exclusive with China in terms of property subjects, property objects, and property relations. The second type of cognition is personality cognition, which is the cognition of “systemic rivalry” by comparing the structural differences of different research perspectives. This type of perception is also called hierarchical perception, which corresponds to the property hierarchy model. The hierarchical model of property considers the formation of larger bodies of property through the gradual constraints of small to large units such as “a person, a family, a group, a locality, or even a country” as a kind of onion-like structure. From this structural viewpoint, the EU and China are both mutually exclusive and cooperative at different levels. The third is the historical perception, i.e., the perception of “systemic rivalry” given by observing the structural changes from the research perspective. This type of cognition is also known as transformational cognition and corresponds to the property transformation model. The property conversion model assumes that the properties of the larger body of property are determined by the dominant property within it, and Marx said,

In all forms of society, there is a certain kind of production that determines the status and influence of all other production, and consequently, its relations determine the status and influence of all other relations. It is a universal light that overshadows all other colors and changes their character. (Marx & Engels, 2012, p. 707)

The replacement of a dominant property by a non-dominant property as the new dominant property implies a change in the nature of the larger body of property. However, since society is in a process of linear progress, or zigzagging spiral, it is always the advanced property that replaces the backward one, thus uniting mankind in a larger space and time. This process corresponds to Marx’s theory of social change, that is, “human property → nomadic property → agricultural property → industrial property” gradually obtains the dominant property status of the process, so that mankind is also moving from the isolated and scattered state gradually to the interconnected global village. Therefore, the future prospect of cooperation between the EU and China is bound to be bright, and

the so-called “systemic rivalry” can only be temporary.

Judgment Method of “Systemic Rival” from the Philosophy of Property System

With the above three basic perceptions, we can already clear the fog, but for in-depth research, major decision-making and think-tank planning are still not enough. Throughout the development of China’s relationship with the European Union, it has been described as intricate and complex. Since its sixth policy paper on China in 2006, the EU has continuously adjusted its characterization of China, defining it successively as a strategic partner, a partner for reform, a major challenge, and now as a trinity (Jin, 2020). On the whole, the confrontation has been increasing, and the situation has become more and more difficult. Therefore, if the characterization is to be robustly grasped and operationalized, it is possible only if the three basic perceptions are taken as a starting point and the three property structure models are comprehensively applied.

Single Judgment and Combined Judgment

A single judgment is one that relies solely on one model of property structure, and a combined judgment is one that is arrived at on the basis of at least two models.

The first three basic cognitions are single judgments, which are different judgments derived from different models. It can be seen that these three perceptions are highly different, namely mutual exclusivity for commonality perception, both mutual exclusivity and cooperation for personality perception, and cooperation for history perception. All three judgments are correct on the basis of their respective models, but they are only applicable to different scenarios. The first perception is undoubtedly justified in terms of national security, but the second is preferable in terms of the political, economic, and cultural spheres, while the third is recognized by anthropologists, historians, and philosophers with a broad perspective. However, a single judgment is not a simple judgment, and the application of any property structure model is complex. Taking the seemingly simplest three-dimensional property model as an example, it has to judge at least three kinds of relationships: the relationship between property subjects, the relationship between property objects, and the relationship between property subjects and objects. Specifically for China and the European Union, from this the relationship can be derived between political, economic, cultural, social, ecological, military, diplomatic, and other aspects. If all these aspects were mutually exclusive, it would be a completely hostile relationship, and the present “systemic rivalry” is certainly not such a relationship, but only mutually exclusive in most aspects and cooperative in aspects such as economic trade, climate change, multilateralism, and public health.

Adding more than two of the three basic perceptions together is called a combination judgment. The complexity of combining judgments naturally needs no introduction, but specific analysis aside, there are four main combinations. Setting common cognition as A, individual cognition as B, and history cognition as C, the four combinations of cognitions are AB, AC, BC, and ABC. The most complex of these four combinations is the ABC combination, and the simplest is the AB combination. In addition to the fact that the ABC portfolio has more factors, it is also because C has a dynamic nature, while the AB portfolio can be basically regarded as a static structure. However, it is already difficult to realize quantitative assessment of the AB model without the help of computer programs, and considering the predictable and unpredictable situations in practice, it is conceivable that the governance practice is facing a great challenge. The relationship involved in the AB model is the relationship between the property subject, the relationship between the property object, the relationship between the property subject and the property object in A, and the relationship between “one person, one family,

one group, one place, or even one country” in B. The AB model is also the most complex because C is dynamic, while AB can be considered a static structure. B’s “one person, a family, a group, a place, and even a country” property relations between the upper and lower levels of property, the relationship between the wrong level of property, the relationship between the levels of property, and the relationship between the layers of property, and the combination of property relations based on the relationship between the upper and lower levels of property. However, China’s relationship with the EU is even more complex, and the emergence of a sovereign Europe among the European sovereigns inevitably transforms AB into AB+. Since “systemic rivalry” appears in the EU documents, we should interpret it as a characterization in the sense of AB+. Of course, we can also choose the characterization of AC+, BC+, and ABC+ according to our needs.

Different Methods of Judgment and Different Subjects of Property

The aforementioned 11 models can evolve into countless other models according to the needs of specific situations, which can be described as complicated. However, the general principle of use is still relatively clear, that is, according to different property subjects, use different methods of judgment. From the perspective of Europe-China relations, the European Union’s characterization of China is not consistent with that of the European countries, and some countries’ characterization of China is even quite different from that of the European Union because “sovereign Europe” is at a different level from the sovereignty of the European countries. The focus of European sovereignty is external sovereignty, and its intention is to strengthen the sovereignty of European countries, not weaken the sovereignty of member states, i.e., to meet the needs of European countries by adding another level on top of it.

The first step in determining the law of judgment is to determine at which level the subject of property is located. According to the property hierarchy model, these levels include individual, family, group, local, national, and supranational sovereignty. Supranational sovereignty is now a trend, including in the United Nations, the European Union, ASEAN, OPEC, APEC, etc., and its role cannot be underestimated. Property subjects at different levels are judged differently. The subject of personal property is at the bottom of the hierarchical model of property, and its main concern is to ensure that its rights are not infringed upon, mainly by the subject of property at a higher level and by parallel subjects of property that bind it. The subject of state property, for its part, is at the highest level in practice, and it must take into account the various levels of individuals, families, groups, localities, etc., under it, as well as deal with the various relationships with other subjects of state property and supranational sovereignty, with a focus on preserving the existence of its authority. Families, groups, and localities, on the other hand, are intermediate between the state and individuals, dealing with relations with property subjects at the upper level as well as with those at the lower level and with those at the same level, with an emphasis on the upward assertion of rights and the downward consolidation of power. The backbone of this sector in contemporary society is the enterprise, and corporate governance is therefore a hallmark and a top priority of modern society. The inventor of the term “systemic rival” is the Federation of German Industries (BDI), which represents the common interests of German industry and calls China the “systemic rival” of the West. Undoubtedly, the BDI proposes this characterization with the level of Chinese industrial enterprises as rivals and, at the same time, takes into account the level of the Chinese state. If C is not taken into account, its qualitative choice is the “A (industrial enterprises) B (industrial enterprises + state)” model, which is different from the EU’s “A (EU) B (individual + family + group + local + state)+” model. therefore, the characterization of “systemic rival” about China is different in the two cases.

In addition to considering the hierarchy, it is also necessary to consider the identity of the subjects of property at the same level. The hierarchical model of property reflects the individuality of property, and it would seem that we no longer need to consider the characteristics of the subjects of property at the same level, but this is far from being the case. At the very least, the following exist: the first is the aggregation of several levels into a single level; the second is a level left over from historical reasons; and the third is an approximation of the level. The first situation is more common: some companies, through the integration of upstream and downstream industry chains and other ways, become large companies, and even some giant companies also have certain government functions. Such companies have multiple levels of aggregation into one level, and a single attribute of the company is difficult to correspond to. The second case is not uncommon, as so many countries, even in the developed West, still have the historical relic of the king, a level that does not exist in the modern state but which has to be merged into the state to design the model for the analysis. In the third case, which is equally common, there are countries that, although they are countries, may be inferior in terms of territory and industry to a province, city, or county of some large country, or even some tribes that are called countries and cannot be equated with a modern country. In fact, we had to conduct sufficient research to set up the analytical model, and its core work is to dig out and distinguish the levels of a certain property body as clearly as possible. It is difficult to make a correct decision if the characteristics of the same level of property subjects are not clearly distinguished. The United Kingdom belongs to Europe geographically, but it is actually the Commonwealth of Nations, which makes it difficult for the “sovereign Europe” to swallow it, and finally the “Brexit” farce has been staged, and at the same time, it has to consider the establishment of a “soft border” or a “hard border” between the Northern Ireland region and the Republic of Ireland. At the same time, the question of whether to establish a “soft border” or a “hard border” between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland had to be considered.

Subjects of State Property and Comprehensive Judgment

In comparison, the subject of state property is the most complex and should be judged in a comprehensive manner.

The importance of the state determines its complexity. There are many reasons for the existence of the state, from economics, which sees it as a source of significant cost savings and facilitates the allocation of resources, to jurisprudence, which sees it as having the ultimate violence to maintain social order, to political science, which sees it as embodying the will of the ruling class and having a public function, and so on. It is precisely because of these many important aspects that it has to deal with all levels of property subjects, resulting in laws that meet the requirements of different property subjects. These laws are as detailed as possible; for example, the laws relating to individuals include, in addition to the fundamental laws and basic laws, various regulations, including the Constitution, the Tort Liability Law, the Civil Procedure Law, the Criminal Procedure Law, the Real Estate Administration Law, the Marriage Law, the Inheritance Law, the Individual Income Tax Law, the Labor Law, the Employment Contracts Law, and the Guarantee Law, among many others. It is clear that the reach of the law extends to all subjects of property at all levels and binds them universally. The same is true externally, as the real subject of war, diplomacy, and other international activities is the state, while other supranational sovereignty is difficult to enforce in practice. It is neither necessary nor possible to choose between co-originality and co-determination of sovereignty at supranational and national levels (Perju, 2018). Therefore, the Treaty on the Constitution of the European Union has not been able to be developed and has been replaced by the Treaty of Lisbon, which does not contain elements specific to sovereignty, such as the Union Song, the Union Flag, and

the EU Foreign Ministers, and EU sovereignty is not linked to the European political agenda. Therefore, compared with corporate governance and so on, only in the practice of national governance is it necessary to comprehensively consider the national governance system, including economy, politics, culture, society, ecological civilization, and party building, as well as the corresponding national governance capacity, including reform, development and stability, internal affairs, foreign affairs, diplomacy and national defense, and governing the party, the country, and the military, and so on.

The law of comprehensive judgment can meet the needs of the subject of state property. According to the above analysis of the philosophical theory of property, the subject of state property needs the law of comprehensive judgment, which, according to the previous logic, is the characterization of the ABC+ model. This method of judgment does not exclude the use of A, B, C, AB, AC, BC, and ABC in certain specific cases, but for in-depth research, major decision-making, and think-tank planning, the ABC+ model is preferred. This model was proposed for the specific case of the European Union, but in practice, in the face of the prevalence of supranational sovereignty, it is inevitable that we will use the ABC+ model in our research and judgment. In today's world, even a country like India, which is a proponent of the Non-Aligned Movement, is de facto a member of different pacts with different functions, not to mention other countries, large and small. Even a country as powerful as the United States is rarely seen acting alone but often works with allies to achieve its goals. As a result, the landscape since World War II has gradually changed, and not only has China been unable to stand alone, but some have even argued that “an undisclosed Cold War reality is unfolding vividly between China and the United States.” (Institutmontaigne.org, 2020). According to the reality of great power competition in the new era, countries also use the ABC+ model, whether it is the EU's “trinity” characterization, the U.S. “trinity” characterization, or Russia's “comprehensive strategic partnership” characterization. The EU-China Strategic Outlook's “ten-point proposal for action” towards China is a good illustration of this. Its first action was to “enhance cooperation with China in order to meet the shared responsibilities of the three pillars of the United Nations”, a supranational sovereign act. Almost every level of individual, corporate, national, and supranational sovereignty is addressed in the Ten Points of Action, and the domains are comprehensively covered from economy to ecology to security. In addition, the changing characterization of China by the EU since 2006 and the Outlook's call for total carbon emissions to peak by 2030 also reflect the role of the transformation model (C). Thus, the “systemic rival” characterization of the “Trinity” refers to the main competitive aspects of China and the EU.

The Response principles of “Systemic Rival” from the Philosophy of Property System

In 2003, 2014, and 2018, the Chinese government issued three policy documents on the EU, whose characterization of the EU has evolved from a “comprehensive partner” (mfa.gov.cn, 2022) to a “comprehensive strategic partner” (全面战略伙伴) (gov.cn, 2022). Its characterization of the EU has evolved from “comprehensive partner” to “comprehensive strategic partner” (mfa.gov.cn, 2022), while the third document calls for “deepening the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership”. However, just two months after China's release of the China-EU Policy Paper in 2018, the EU's EU-China Strategic Outlook, released in March 2019, featured a characterization of China as a “systemic rival”. Looking back at the three policy documents on the European Union, the starting point of their judgment on China-EU relations has basically remained unchanged, i.e., the view that there is no conflict of interest or fundamental strategic conflict between China and the European Union, that they do not pose a threat to each other, and that their common ground far outweighs their differences. So, in the face of a sharp turn in the EU's characterization of China, how will the fourth policy paper on the EU

be formulated? And how do you respond to similar situations in a timely manner? Mao Zedong, speaking on the question of strategy, pointed out,

The saying in the book of Sun Wu Zi, a great military man of ancient China, “Knowing the enemy and knowing yourself, one will not be in peril in a hundred battles,” is a saying that covers both the stages of learning and of using, and that includes recognizing the laws of development of objective reality and deciding one’s own actions in accordance with these laws to overcome the current enemy; we should not belittle this saying. enemy; let us not belittle this saying. (Mao, 1991, p. 182)

While having principles does not guarantee ultimate victory, deviating from them can easily lead to defeat. For this reason, we summarize the laws based on the aforementioned argumentation of various models and put forward the following principles in order to provide a basic reference for dealing with various competitive situations.

First, we must maintain a competitive and cooperative situation. From the analysis of the model of “systemic rivalry”, there is no perfect competition; competition and cooperation are the norm, and cooperation is the general trend. The results of the three basic cognitive studies prove this point: taking the commonality cognition A, it is easier to conclude that overall competition or cooperation, when the cooperation factor is greater than the competition factor is cooperation, when the cooperation factor is less than the competition factor is competition; taking the individuality cognition B, it will be found that there is competition as well as cooperation at different levels, because the competition at a certain level can’t impede the cooperation at other levels and vice versa, so it’s a state of competition and cooperation; taking the historical cognition C, one again sees that cooperation is inevitably replacing competition, i.e. cooperation is the general trend. Other models are also consistent with this conclusion: A is subject to B in the AB model, and even if A is competition, it can’t cut off B’s cooperation at certain levels; A is also subject to C in the AC model, and even if A is competition, it can’t block C’s general trend of cooperation; in the BC model, cooperation is the main thing, and competition is the second thing. By the same logic, the ABC model justifies this conclusion. The first important principle, therefore, is to maintain a competitive and cooperative dynamic. This principle has three meanings: first of all, we must realize that there is no complete competition or complete cooperation in the real situation, and any conclusion drawn from these extreme situations is necessarily false; secondly, we must make it clear that the starting point of decision-making is to maintain the competitive and cooperative situation, with the aim of avoiding the emergence of a state of complete competition and complete cooperation; finally, we must understand that decision-making can only be competitive and cooperative decision-making, and all decision-making, whether on the basis of content or goal, is “from competition and cooperation, to competition and cooperation”, and will not and cannot be permanent. All decisions, in terms of basis, content, and objectives, are “from competition and cooperation to competition and cooperation” and will not and cannot solve the problem once and for all, but must be realistic. While China’s characterization of the EU has always been one of comprehensive cooperation, it also recognizes that there are differences between the two. The second and third policy documents on the EU call for a “China-EU partnership for reform” and “adhering to fairness and justice, working together in the same boat, and jointly promoting the improvement of the global governance system,” which in a sense is the same as the EU’s characterization of China as a “systemic rival” characterization of the European Union to China in a certain way having the same meaning. This, in fact, shows that China and Europe are in a competitive and cooperative situation.

Secondly, there is no fixed model of competitive cooperation. We conduct research, decision-making, and planning from The philosophy of property system, and we do not need to solve the problem of source power.

Property itself implies competition for survival, as Zeng Guang Xian Wen has said: “People die for money, birds die for food,” so we have to think more about cooperation. The two sides in China and Europe are respectively a national and a supranational property body, and they must be based on their own development research, decision-making, and planning. Due to the unidirectionality of property relations, their behavior must be to buy and sell; even if the first to buy is also to sell, competition is its underlying logic. Without the ability to compete, there is no way to talk about cooperation. It is therefore more important for national and supranational property bodies to find space for cooperation rather than to create competition, which is already there. In reality, however, this is not always the case, and what we see is often competition packaged as cooperation, or cooperation under the guise of competition. Therefore, a more scientific and objective identification with the help of models becomes a necessity, not only qualitatively but also quantitatively. With the help of this set of tools, it is always possible to find room for cooperation with greater precision, even in a highly competitive situation. A range of terms have been proposed to capture the state of competition and cooperation, such as partner, strategic partner, strategic collaborative partner, and so on. In practice, in order to define the difference, many modifiers have been added to these terms to indicate the uniqueness of a particular model. The 2019 EU-China Strategic Outlook describes China as a “trinity” (partner, competitor, and institutional adversary) of comprehensive strategic partners; the US Interim National Security Strategy 2021 describes China as the only competitor capable of posing an enduring challenge with a combination of economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power; the 2014 China-EU Policy Paper describes the EU as a “mutually beneficial and win-win comprehensive strategic partner”, and China describes Russia as a “comprehensive strategic cooperation partner”. It shows that there is no fixed model of competition and cooperation. However, we can also observe that a forest of various patterns actually changes between models and can be represented by composite models, which makes it possible to overcome the sufferings of different linguistic differences, ambiguous lexical connotations, and the unclear nature of particular patterns. Analyzing the EU’s characterization of China, its “trinity” can be split into: “China is at the same time a partner with whom the EU shares common goals, a negotiating partner with whom the EU needs to seek a balance of interests” (the general situation of competition and cooperation), “an economic competitor pursuing technological leadership” (the level of B high-tech enterprises), and “a ‘systemic rival’ advocating alternative modes of governance” (the level of A property subject), “an economic competitor in pursuit of technological leadership” (B high-tech enterprise level), and “a ‘systemic rival’ that promotes alternative modes of governance” (A property subject). By analyzing the model, we can conclude that the EU’s characterization of China is only temporary, and in order to solve the actual problem, it has put forward ten actions, which is what we call C, specific actions, such as the EU’s issuance of a proposal for the 5G network in B, and so on. Of course, if we have the details of the “ten actions”, we can also incorporate them into the model so as to give a clear model of competition and cooperation based on the final counterparts. Conversely, through detailed research, the cooperation model can be named as aptly as possible, either structurally similar to the “Trinity” characterization or the “Five-in-One” overall layout, or such as “Peace, Growth, Reform, and Civilization” and the “Four Comprehensives” strategic layout. The clear naming of the model is very conducive to understanding, grasping, publicizing, implementing, executing, and adjusting, which is in line with the spirit of Mao Zedong’s statement on strategy formulation and execution, which reads,

If the plan and the situation do not match or do not fit together well, it is necessary to make new judgments in accordance with new understandings and to set a new determination to change the plan that has already been made, so as to make it suitable for the new situation. situation. (Mao, 1991, p. 180)

Thirdly, both temporary confrontation and complementarity will lead to new competitive cooperation. Confrontation means complete competition without cooperation, and complementarity means complete cooperation without competition. As far as national and supranational sovereignty is concerned, these two situations are hardly ever seen in reality, but throughout world history, such situations have been commonplace. In general, both temporary confrontation and complementarity will lead to new competitive cooperation, albeit on a new, higher, and more advanced level. This phenomenon of property reshaping is fully revealed by Model C. When a new property relationship becomes a universal light, new national and supranational sovereignty emerges, and then a new pattern of competition and cooperation is formed, ushering in a brighter direction for mankind. Model C demonstrates not simply the replacement of one property force by another but also the equalization of the old and the new, and even more so, the triumph of the new property force and the union of mankind into a greater power in a wider space and time. It also indicates that human beings will unite to become a larger body of property in a wider space and time, and that human beings will become more and more emancipated. The replacement of one property force by another is not necessarily progressive if it is simply the replacement of one property force by another, and the cyclical rate of history of feudal dynasties is simply the result of regimes of the same nature falling over each other. Since the Qin Dynasty, subsequent dynasties have essentially been a replica of the previous one, week after week. The balance of power between the old and the new is also very common, and some people think that the ruling structure of Chinese feudal society is a “pivotal circle mechanism”, i.e., a composite ruling system centered on the king’s power, bureaucratized, and radiating the two major regions of agrarian and nomadic pastoralism (Hai, 2019). This phenomenon is often referred to as assimilation, such as in the Yuan and Qing dynasties, the most typical expression of the Mongolian and Han Chinese. Manchu and Han Chinese are not the same, but a wonderful combination. This is also true of some modern reformist practices, as fully reflected in the guiding philosophy of the late Qing dynasty’s foreign affairs school: “Middle school for the body, Western learning for the use.” The time it takes for the forces of new property to overcome the forces of old property is insignificant in relation to the cycle of domination of the forces of new property, but it is crucial. The emergence of each social form adapted to the new property is followed by a longer historical period in which it creates greater rights for property subjects in a wider space and time. These national and supranational sovereignties are in competition and cooperation until a more progressive property force becomes the new dominant property. Competition and cooperation imply social stability and are in the interests of the broadest possible range of people, both in terms of maximizing current benefits through cooperation and in terms of pushing human society towards a higher level of civilization through competition. Competition and cooperation are a dialectical unity of confrontation and complementarity, which avoids the single rigid state of confrontation or complementarity and is therefore the destination of both. Based on the principles of competition and cooperation, we can see that “systemic rival” is only one of the three poles of “partners, competitors, and systemic rivals”, and it is not a kind of complete competition. However, as far as China’s policy documents on Europe are concerned, it is not possible to stick to the current positioning of “comprehensive strategic partnership” with Europe, nor can it be adjusted to the positioning of confrontation, but to define a new China-EU relationship under the principles of competition and cooperation is the best policy.

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