

Interview with Professor Ye Jiang, Director of European Studies, SIIS



Question 1: China-EU High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue is an important platform aimed at promoting and developing economic cooperation. Similar mechanisms exist between China and the US, China and Japan. Given the fact that the EU is the biggest trading partner of China, do you think this EU-China mechanism should be reinforced in order to include in-depth discussion on social and environmental matters?

Yes actually, just now you mentioned EU is the largest, the biggest first trade partner with and I think China is the second or the third largest partner with EU in terms of trade. So Actually I think we have a very healthy mechanism between China and the EU. So, on the other hand we also need to promote the mechanism, promote the dialogue specifically when sometimes the political climate is not that good. So we still need to try to enhance our relation between China and the EU and its member states. Specifically like Greece, I think specifically from 2006 the critical relation between China and the EU are not so good as before, but China and Greek relationship not only economically but also in the political fields are pretty good. But still we need to enhance mechanism on economic dialogues. And on the other hand climate change issues and environmental issues are quite important for both sides. So when we talk about the trade issue we need to know that actually both sides should try to promote the prevention and the cooperation in terms of the corporate responsibility on climate change and the environment issues and so forth. So that's quite important for us.

Question 2: It is said that, in the context of the current global crisis, European economies are increasingly feeling the "China factor": high unemployment rates in several European countries, hollowed-out tertiary industries in the Mediterranean countries and relative lack of competitiveness in the "new" Central European member states. In result, voices of concern and protectionism can be heard across the continent. How should we deal with this kind of concerns?

First thing that we should fight against the protectionism because the best way for us is to try to find a way out in terms of coping with the financial as well as the economic crisis all over the world. But if every country try just to protect itself and carry out the "mind thy neighbours policy" it would cause the whole world turn down. So China mainly at the moment try to promote the free trade. And we really don't think that the way try to protect your own market can really help. Maybe for the short-term, to some extent maybe it works but for the long term it won't work. And for example during the last century, 1929-1939, in that period when those countries not only in Europe but also the United States tried to carry out the "buy the neighbour policy" and to protect their market but it allowed of course the Second World War.

But that's not the way for the entire world specifically because China and the EU comprehensive strategic partners, if we are partners we need to deal with the economic difficulties with open mind and open our markets. And of course at the same time I think the healthy competitions between the two parts I think is very important for us. On the other hand I think, at the same time of course we have a huge foreign currency reserve so we also try to set our strategic derogations to purchase bilaterally to those European countries like Germany, UK so on so forth. On the other hand, I think China and EU are economically complimentary so we need each other. So for example just now I mentioned the EU is the first trade partner, the largest trade partner for us, but also EU is the largest provider for the technology to Chinese market. So that means both economies complimentary. That means we can use our labour forces where you can use your technology. At the same time I think China and the Greek also in terms of economies, are economically complimentary. So, we can cooperate with each other and is not a good way for us to protect ourselves, we try to open up. China has already carried out the opening up policy for 30 years. So we have experienced, we have been better off through the opening up so I think at the same time, the European countries, the EU can also be better off through opening up to the world and also to Chinese market.

Question 3: It is often said that the existing global political and financial institutions are no longer effective in an era where non-Western powers are rising fast at the regional and global context. Is there an urgent need for reform of those institutions and what should be the direction for such change?

First of all, I think the United States is still very strong. Although they are facing the financial crisis and at the same time I think the international financial system and mechanisms are not that suitable for the new challenges both of us are facing. And .actually I think those emerging powers as well as European Union should have more voice at this financial and monetary system, international financial system. But we still have a long way to go. We cannot change the mechanism abruptly or overnight. And that means, on the one hand United States should try to listen to the other countries like European Union or China and other emerging powers like Brazil, India and even South Africa and so on so fourth. And on the other hand I think European Union as well as China and other emerging powers also should be a little bit patient because to some extent I think this mechanism needs to be reformed but we cannot try to change it wholly and totally. So, that's the good way for us to cope with the financial crisis.

Question 4: Greece and China are countries with ancient civilizations but otherwise very different in terms of size, influence, foreign policy priorities, political system, culture, etc. What values and interests do two countries share? What are the possible areas for cooperation?

I think that the commonality between China and Greece is we are both with the ancient culture, traditional cultures. And both of us we appreciate our own culture as well as we appreciate each others traditional culture. And that's the commonality. And at the same time both of us really think that peace, development and cooperation are, I think, remain the main themes in this world. So we need to cooperate with each other to promoting world peace, enhanced cooperation and try to promote

development. That's the commonality but of course we have at the same time are different. But actually, I think the common grounds between us far outweigh those differences. And the world is a world with cultural diversity. Although we have the history very long ago, but the histories are quite different between China and Greece. And the best thing is that we can understand each other, because we have long history, so we are very patient with each other so we cooperate quite well with each other. Although for example like the issues of human rights and democracy and so on so forth maybe we have different opinion towards that but the one thing is that both countries really want to lead our citizens, our people to be better off. And we both protect our own citizens' farewell, maybe with different ways but actually just now I mentioned both of us really think that peace, development and cooperation are very important for both sides. So that's I think the basis for us to cooperate with each other quite well. One is we have the history, long history and second is we have the common values like peace development and cooperation. And thirdly I think, just now I mentioned, we have the economically complimentary and China and Greece really collaborate quite well. I can just give you an example, for example culturally in 2004 you very successfully organized the Olympic Games and then in 2008 I should say also very successfully organized after we learnt a lot from EU. And actually you know your president as well as our president visited both countries last year and enhanced our relation. I think both of us really enhance our relation based on cooperation peace and development.