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Current Event Report: Contemporary Europe

Chinese and European trade has grown rapidly over the past few years into a \$225bn business, but economic relations between the European Union and China continue to be stressed as a result of the dispute over cheap Chinese goods being dumped on EU markets, as it did in a recent bilateral meeting between the two sides. China has continued its demands to be given full EU market economy status, saying that it would “reflect mutual respect and equality” between the two nations, while José Manuel Barroso, the president of the European Commission, has pointed out four specific criteria that would have to first be met, involving: influence of the state, accounting rules, bankruptcy, and reform of the financial services sector. “Once these criteria are fulfilled, we won't wait a day,” he told journalists. However, China’s human rights has also remained a dividing issue between the EU and China., though Chinese officials have objected against linking economic and trade issues with human rights issues. At the same meeting, both sides made limited progress in Darfur, where the crisis has worsened as the Sudanese government ordered 7,000 African Union troops out of the country because of their plan to exchange for a United Nations force at the end of the month. The EU presently maintains an arms embargo on China as a result of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, but has said it’s willing to revisit the issue. This meeting was scheduled to be held before a two-day Asia Europe meeting (ASEF), where multiple Asian and European countries will come together to discuss.

From this article, much can be derived about the status of contemporary Europe and China, economically and in regards to each other. That Europe and China are working on developing an economic exchange shows that both are trying to enter as a strong force in the global marketplace. However, in these discussions, China has been asking Europe for most of the concessions to open up its

trade to their nation, a complete role reversal from the 19th century when Europe was still seeking ways to invade the elusive Chinese market (though they accomplished this through the means of illegal drug trafficking, rather than political discussion). As the EU is also dictating most of the terms by which the economy between Europe and China should develop, including the basis of human rights, it shows that Europe is currently a more powerful world force than China and that its form of economy and democracy is currently predominant in the world, enough so that China would look to adapt to it. However, it shows that Europe is also open to helping other countries compete on its terms and working together with other countries, instead of abusing its position of power as it would have been liable to do only a century ago.

I think this article is just a sign of the times of a changing marketplace. China is increasingly becoming a larger world power, developing its economy and coming back from its economic irrelevance this past century. It's also interesting to see that Europe is aiding China in developing its economy, making concessions into its marketplace so that China can compete. It signals that, in the future, a global marketplace may become a reality, where all countries compete on an economically and politically level playing field in the world. It will also be interesting to see whether China will adopt a more democratic government in the coming years at the behest of Western nations trying to trade with China on their terms. In any case, this still shows that Europe is a Western power and is rather unwilling to bend to the terms of another country; time will tell whether or not the West will make concessions to rising Third World nations in the future, or whether they will remain ignorant of a non-Eurocentric world.

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