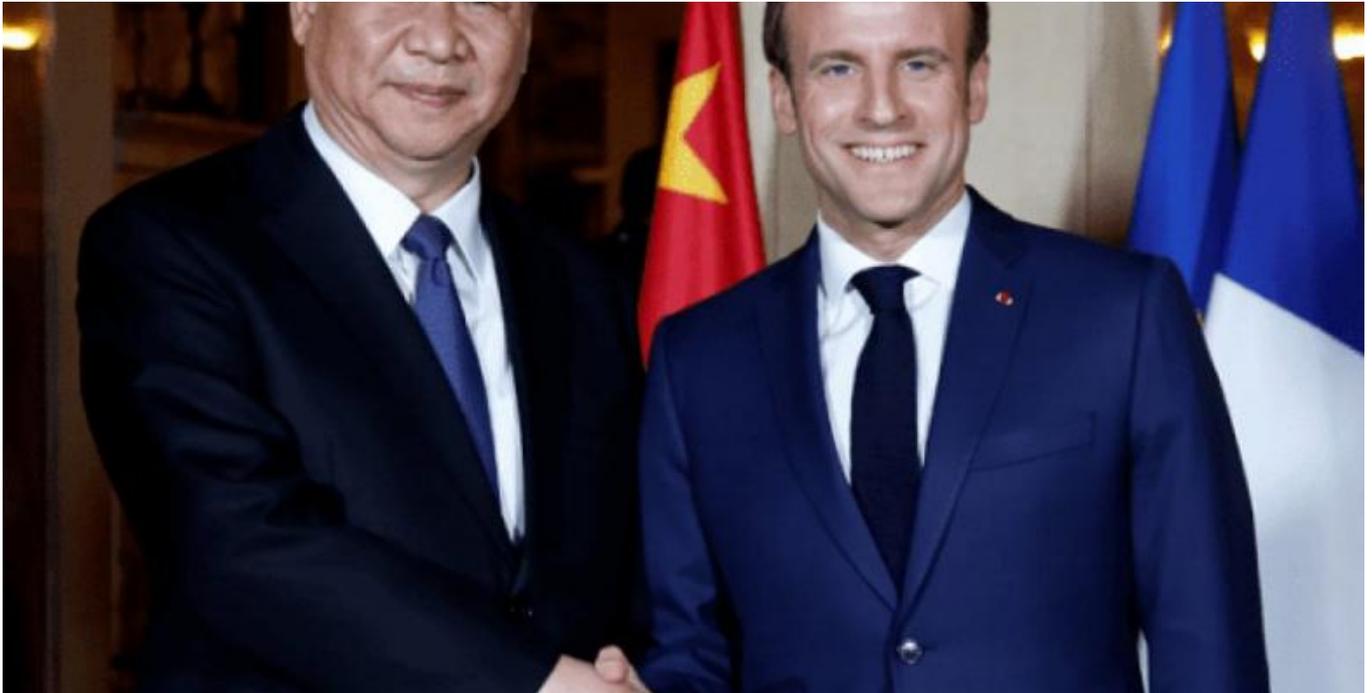


China's Xi Talks 'Silk Road' With Macron, Monaco

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President Xi Jinping looks to maintain strong relations with France and pave the way for the Silk Road in Europe after Italy signs on to the major project.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, meeting with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron Sunday, said the visit was important to continued China-France relationship and economic development.

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Xi reminded those present at his meeting with Macron in Nice that France was the first Western country to establish diplomatic relations with China, which officially began 55 years ago.

"This is a valuable asset that we inherit and must carry forward to keep China-France relations at the forefront of the times," Xi said.

The Chinese president added that both China and France uphold UN charters and oppose protectionist policies in international affairs.

"The history of China-France cooperation shows that bilateral ties are not 'a zero-sum game.' The strong complementarity relations between the two economies will remain for a long time," Xi said.

China's head of state said he's looking forward to speeding up his government's Belt and Road project, or Chinese Silk Road, a major energy and transport infrastructure network

spearheaded by China to connect Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. Going against the advice of the European Union Commission, [Italy](#) just became the first European country to sign on to the project during Xi's visit with Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte Saturday.

"China stands ready to strengthen strategic communication and coordination with France on major issues including the UN affairs, the reform of the World Trade Organization and climate change," Xi said.

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President Macron, who is facing 28 percent approval ratings among voters and weekly, anti-austerity 'Yellow Vest' protests said that France is strengthening its bilateral trade, technology and cultural exchanges with China. The French president said he's paying close attention to the Belt and Road Initiative however has said the Silk Road must be a two way street if France is to participate in the international project.

"We have a lot to do together in terms of climate action, in terms of multilateralism, but we also have to defend our own interests," Macron said speaking in Brussels last Thursday.

Finance Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian was more directly critical of the Belt and Road last Friday while talking to French media. "If we're going to talk about a new Silk Road, then it must be one that goes in both directions," said the minister.

Xi also made a visit to Monaco Sunday making him the first Chinese leader to visit the wealthy city-state bordered by Italy and France.

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