

FRENCH PRESIDENT MACRON IN CHINA

The New Silk Roads of China, a New Meaning And a New Language Towards a Renewed World Order and Dream for Humanity

This is an edited speech, parts of which are paraphrased, that French President Emmanuel Macron delivered in Xi'an, China, Jan. 8.

Macron began:

“I am very happy today to have the opportunity to speak to you after having spent the morning with you, my hosts, in this beautiful city of Xi’an.

“France has, for a very long time, seen itself in the mirror of China. China has brought together, over the centuries, profound ideas, poetry and art, as well as reflections on war, power, and human existence. China has invigorated our imagination with ambitious voyages, carrying extraordinary merchandise and singular discoveries.

“It is the China of merchants, discovered by Marco Polo—and the treasures that followed from a civilization that seemed mysterious and was poorly understood, which traveled on those Silk Roads, to which you give, today, a new meaning and a new language. Today we must remember, in our imagination, those caravans arriving at the oasis of Dunhuang with the treasure of your civilization echoing in the sand dunes.

“The shipments of food-stuffs and merchandise that were exchanged were accompanied by thoughts, words, and customs—a type

of phenomenon noted by Marguerite Yourcenar in her fictional *Memoirs of Hadrian*—which would rapidly take over the globe, faster than marching legions. They brought back from their wanderings unknown objects and materials in which France and other countries immediately delighted, not in a faddish ephemeral way, but with the intensity of a discovery that became integrated into our historical culture. There is hardly a royal castle today that doesn’t have a Chinese salon, hardly an artist, artisan or engineer who has not been fascinated by the styles and techniques learned from China.

“This continues in our times, because China is the country of inventors and engineers who are constantly inventing the future. China is also its broad diaspora spread throughout the world, progressively transform-



Xinhua/Liu Xiao

French President Emmanuel Macron and the First Lady are hosted at China's cultural treasure, the Terracotta Warriors and Horses of Emperor Qin Shihuang in Xi'an, Jan. 8, 2018.

ing the cities in which they live. France is honored to have the largest Chinese diaspora in Europe.

“It is the China of warriors that I just witnessed in the Xi’an terracotta army necropolis—which forms part of the respect for the figure of the Chinese soldier, a soldier immortalized by Sun Tzu in his book, *The Art of War*, which has been known to Europeans since the 18th century, and which is still used with students in our military schools.

“We share this same respect for soldiers, the honors due to soldiers and those others who die in service for their country. I pay tribute here to all your compatriots, buried in the French Nolette Chinese Cemetery in the Somme, which is dear to me, or in other places. Most of them were not soldiers, but Chinese workers who came to support France’s effort during the First World War.

“Thousands were assigned to difficult tasks in mines, trenches, or factories, working with soldiers and the sick—with the French people. Some went on to start families, others left. Many are with us today in France. A few months before the commemoration of the end of that world conflict, I want us to remember them; they were our brothers in those tragic hours.

“It is also the China of writers and thinkers; it is almost 450 years since the founding of first Jesuit mission in China.

“We, the French people, never cease to examine and question. From the beginning, we perceived in the Chinese way of thinking a vision of the world, anchored in beliefs and concepts different than ours. We have, for more than 200 years, seen differences with the seeming basis of our own beliefs, And yet, in this very difference, we also believe in a human community, because often this difference is convergence. Poets have the best feel for this. So is your poet Wang Bo, from whom one can understand you, even at the opposite end of the world, like a neighbor. Or Victor Segalen, who came to China to find the bricks and tiles of his poetry, and discovering here, in Xi’an, the faded but rich smell of buried centuries.”

He continued by describing the impact of Chinese literature and poetry on the writings of Paul Claudel and Saint-John Perse, and praised the translators, “who tirelessly translate, question, and publish our literature.” Macron asserted, “Nothing can replace this fruitful contact between our two languages, our two universes, our cultures, and a constant proof that dialogue is possible.”

He continued, saying:

“Sometimes, when those of us from Europe try to understand China, to forge a path to understanding, we are often told that it’s an incomprehensible continent. Don’t expect to come back to China; there are too many opposing groups.”

He explained, “I do not believe in this attitude, for all the reasons I just mentioned. There are things which are untranslatable, chasms that we must narrow, but there are always ways and paths, to gradually circumscribe these untranslatable things and find the paths that bind us. The Chinese culture, like the French culture, must be apprehended in all of its historical nuances,” and praised, by name, each of the great French Sinologists, students of Chinese geography, of intellectual, political, and artistic culture.

Macron continued:

“Sinology in Europe was born in France. In the Nineteenth Century philosophers and historians always turned to the French experts to try to understand China. This has always been a fruitful dialogue, and one we must always approach with humility. It was a unique position. When Europeans, for decades, wanted to understand China, they went to a French Sinologist, and very often, when the Chinese wanted to go to Europe, to understand it intimately, they went through the same route, through France.

“European Sinology continues to reinvent itself today in France, and remains a key discipline in our intellectual landscape. Inalco, the French National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations, has been a vital element for more than two centuries. We must remember that there will be detours, that we need humility, because dialogue can be sometimes long and difficult. Always, we must have respect, to enrich our mutual fascination and friendly curiosity, and there find a path.

“Our history shows that we are always enriched by our differences; whether visually, through harmonies, or by the spoken word, we have always found a path for exchanges. We find beautiful what you find beautiful. I speak here from this imperial palace of Daminggong, cradle of the Tang Dynasty and many high points of your art, your history. France renews the commitment, begun in 2016, to work with you to preserve these treasures of mankind.

“We share a deep sense of the history of the world and its people, and it is not to be taken lightly that we find that certain places, and their sense of universal value, equally important and beautiful. With that com-

monality, we have had a great friendship that endures beyond the tangled paths of unfolding events. General de Gaulle spoke about ‘the choice of reason,’ but also ‘the choice of the evidence,’ in his 1964 decision to grant diplomatic recognition to the People’s Republic of China. It is this evidence today that is still the hallmark; the evidence of a relationship of centuries, the evidence of a joint concern to apprehend the world in its complexity, the evidence of a shared future in today’s mutual concerns.”

“France and China are not only two nations,” Macron said, “but two civilizations,” because both share a certain conception of man. Humanity is today at a crossroads, and its future is at stake, and in this context, China and France “have a common destiny.” The key notions around which this relationship must be built are “three: intelligence, justice, and balance.”

Intelligence

“We need shared intelligence to create a better world and to fight all forms of obscurantism: Islamic terrorism, blind nationalism,” which lead to war, isolationism, a vain attempt to protect oneself from the world. Intelligence to overcome fears “which exist in Europe against China. In one generation you had the energy to become one of the main world powers and now you have the ambition to go beyond. The rapidity of that change can provoke fears. . . . The only way to overcome them is to work to understand what the word ‘power’ means for each of us.”

By intelligence, he means more education for all the citizens, but also a joint partnership in digital technologies and artificial intelligence. China has 37 million university students, the Confucius Institutes, artists, massive investment in new, digital technologies and artificial intelligence. France is also moving in that direction. “Even though we are known here for our art of living, gastronomy, and romanticism, we are also a digital power, with energy transition, artificial intelligence, innovation, research, industry, a financial industry,” emphasized Macron.

We will be stronger if we lead this fight for “intelligence” together, he stressed, proposing first to multiply cultural projects such as the permanent exhibit on the Han Dynasty at the Paris Asian museum, Musée Guimet. Macron also proposed the creation of “a great



Exhibit at the Paris Asian art museum, Musée Guimet.

European Sinology institute,” and the founding of new partnerships on innovation, digital, and technologies. For this we need numerous creative individuals, and free innovation. The strength of your country is that you have millions of people who are creative individuals. We also need partnerships in energy transition, medical innovation, and innovation in agriculture and food industries, to ensure our food sovereignty. The teaching of languages must also be encouraged, particularly in French.

Justice in the Crisis of Global Capitalism

The second pillar, is the fight for justice, and first of all, social justice, said Macron, recognizing that China has succeeded in pulling some 700 million out of poverty in the last decades.

This is a challenge for France, confronted by mass unemployment, but also the whole world is undergoing

a crisis of globalized capitalism which has led to an explosion of inequalities and to the concentration of wealth, over the last ten years.

Joint Development in Africa

To overcome France’s history of “unilateral imperialism in Africa,” Macron proposed that France and China work together in Africa, where China has invested a lot in recent years in infrastructure, in raw materials, with strong financial support that European nations don’t have. But France has a historical and cultural knowledge of Africa which are important for the future. He called on launching joint, financially sustainable projects in Africa which are very useful for the growth of the continent, without reproducing the errors of the past, i.e., creating financial and political dependence under the pretext of development. Tomorrow the Agence Française de Développement and the China Development Bank will sign a contract on this basis. “France’s history of unilateral imperialism sometimes lead to the worst results.” Today, with the launching of these New Silk Roads, a partnership between France and China can avoid those errors.

Macron invited China to join the conference on partnership in education that France is organizing next February in Dakar, Senegal, and so to give another face to those Silk Roads where immense work has been done in infrastructures and economic development.

Balance

Finally, the last pillar: Macron called for reaching a balance, a kind of new world order from which China will no longer be excluded.

The histories of both countries have been sometimes made of “tensions,” of “periods of hegemony,” and of “imperial wills, each in its own manner, maritime or continental,” he recognized, stating, however that what unites France and China is their connection to the world, their claim to universality.

“We live in a world where stability was established more than 60 years ago, at the end of one of the worst conflicts the world has ever seen, when barbarism struck at the heart of Europe.

“We structured globalization with a notion of in-



Presidency of the French Republic

Senegal President Macky Sall (right) with President of France Emmanuel Macron.

ternational law and international structures of which China is at the heart, like us, as a permanent member of the Security Council, but where I know China sometimes has the feeling of having been left outside,” a feeling that “this postwar order is a Western order not really made for us. And sometimes the Western powers have contributed to develop that sentiment.”

“We are living today through a crisis of this contemporary world order which has been weakened by the emergence of authoritarian powers, because nuclear proliferation has re-emerged as a threat and because contemporary capitalism is being overwhelmed by its own excess and is producing the social inequalities I alluded to earlier or the climate inequalities we’re experiencing.”

In this context, Macron raised the geopolitical problems in the world, such as North Korea, international terrorism, and the Middle East. On the Korean crisis, he praised China’s contribution to solving the problem. He committed France to a negotiated solution to the crisis. In the fight against terrorism, he said that he expects terrorism to rebound in Asia, after having been eliminated in the Middle East. On these questions, Macron apologized for the role of France and the West in the destabilizations of Libya and Iraq, and committed himself never to use force against sovereign nations.

“From Central Asia to Southern Asia, there are numerous threats which can weaken the entire continent.

It is therefore our responsibility to fight together against them, building political solutions to the conflicts and drawing the lessons of past errors. I want to say this very clearly: I think there must be a community of views concerning how to solve those conflicts. In each country where divisions exist, where authoritarian regimes are deployed, where sometimes the worst is on hand, France will not defend military solutions which will act against people's sovereignty. We will do everything to work with civil societies and with our friends to bring about pluralist political solutions that will allow all people at the same time to respect one another, to eradicate terrorism, and also to build durable political solutions."

He continued: "We must draw the lessons of past errors. Every time we tried to impose the truth or the law against the people themselves, we were wrong and sometimes even produced worse situations. Such was Iraq, or Libya today. We need to work together to develop the respect of sovereignty of all people..." He expressed the wish in this respect that both can work together toward "inclusive" political solutions in Libya or in Syria in the coming months, and called for a common fight against the sources of terrorist financing. There will be a conference in Paris in April on that very subject, which is open to China as well.

"Multilateralism must be redefined, based on this new idea of balance that we now share. Some in China say that the rules presiding over international relations have been written thus far by the West. To that I respond very soberly that history sets a frame but does not necessarily impose it upon us. Our two millenary nations have survived because we were always able to reinvent ourselves, despite sometimes being victimized by the history often invented by us, and we were also able to accept difficult periods, but also to seize the opportunities to grow and shine."

Harmony Against Geopolitics

"The more important place a country occupies, the greater the responsibilities. The multilateralism which must be redefined implies finding balanced cooperation to be invented for this new century. There should be neither a disguised supremacy, nor a conflict between competing supremacies. All our art, if I can use that word, will not be an art of war but an art of balanced cooperation in order to ensure in the geostrategic, political, and economic levels the harmony our world needs.

"If the multilateralism that we have is challenged and if China wants to engage in this battle, the conclusion is for me very clear. It is up to Europe and Asia, up to France and China, to define and propose together the rules of a game in which we will all win, or we will all lose. I have come thus to tell China my determination to have the Euro-Chinese partnership enter into the 21st century with this new grammar we must all define together. Europe will engage resolutely in this strategy because it is conscious of its role in the century to come."

Europe and the Silk Roads

"Europe is back," claimed Macron, and said that it is so "because some of us want to give it a perspective of medium term, 10 to 15 years, to rebuild a sovereign, united, democratic Europe which will be an economic, social, environmental, and scientific power able to dialogue with China and the U.S." He continued, "We are working with the German Chancellor and number of other European leaders for a project aimed at providing the heart of Europe with the elements of sovereignty, and the year 2018 will be a turning point in this respect. . . .

"I want you to understand something today: France is here, becoming transformed in depth and wants to be that country of dialogue and construction of a new partnership for the 21st Century with China. With it, Europe is back and wants, through the building of its own power, to build a balanced cooperation with China in the coming century.

"It is through honest, loyal and readable dialogue that we will be able to progress. . . . It is a trust built by trial and error methods. It is to decide to make a step, then another, and that we decide together, and that there is no lasting friendship if it doesn't follow this road. . . . It is in this same spirit that I wish for us to advance on those Silk Roads. Indeed, One Belt, One Road is the perspective that China gave itself and that it has proposed to the world. And when a proposal is on the table, it is not my habit not to discuss it. I understand the opportunities for China, on the economic level for finding new markets internationally; on the political level in order to open up regions hit by underdevelopment; on the diplomatic level, to stabilize trade in fragile regions where there are states in difficulty. . . ; on the cultural level since it's a matter of exerting a leadership with the force of new ideas."



The two-unit Taishan nuclear power project, using advanced, third-generation nuclear power technology, under construction in Chixzhen, Taishan, Guangdong province, China. It is a China-foreign joint project with large participation by Areva and Electricité de France. The bulk of French electricity production is nuclear powered. France exports electricity to Germany, which is stupidly shutting down all its nuclear plants by 2022.

The Silk Roads Must Be Shared Roads

“I think that the initiative of the New Silk Roads can meet our interests, those of France and of Europe, if we give ourselves the means to really work together. After all, the Silk Roads were never purely Chinese, to be honest. When we talk about the Maritime Silk Roads they were first Portuguese. On land, they went through Central Asia, Iran, Iraq, Tyre, and Antioch, and in so doing they were Sino-European. The genius of the first Silk Roads was to have reinvented often the European routes to make the Chinese. . . . I’m trying to say that those roads are simply essentially the same, those roads are always shared. And if they are routes, they cannot be only one-sided. They must go back and forth.”

I Am Ready To Work with the New Silk Road

“I am ready to work on our common objectives. The programs for roads, railways, airports, maritime routes, and technological development along the Silk Roads provide a solution to the deficit in infrastructure, especially in Asia, and creates new perspectives in sectors such as transport, water management, waste, planned cities, and the green economy. Combining our public and private financial resources for trans-border projects can reinforce the connectivity between Europe and Asia, and the Middle East and Africa, contributing to the expansion, integration and coherent structuring of

trade and growth of the improvement to come in these regions.

“The city of Xi’an is the living example of how they will be able to do even better. Those first Silk Roads brought Buddhism, Islam and Christianity here. Those roads will lead to cultural and educational exchanges, and to profound transformations in the countries they are crossing. It is a matter of giving ourselves a perspective at a moment when we have lost the excitement of the great epics, which are so cruelly absent in the world. I must say, it is one of the great merits of those Silk Roads proposed by Xi Jinping. Those Silk Roads reactivate the imagination of a new civilization, of fruitful exchanges of shared wealth. They show to all those who thought that we were in a tired, post-modern world, where the great epics were forbidden, that those who decide to live great epics can make the others dream as well. I believe profoundly in great epic stories. It is up to France, and with it, to Europe to contribute its own part of imagination to this proposal and to work at it in the months and years to come. . . .”

Speaking of balanced cooperation, he said, “I believe that to progress towards those objectives that we share, we must give ourselves also good rules. . . . We must respond to objectives that we assign ourselves as common goods. . . . The Silk Roads cannot be the routes of a new hegemonism which would make vassals of the

countries they cross. They must contribute to the intelligence of the 21st Century.” Among the new rules: those of “transparency, interoperability, opening of public markets, respect of competition, intellectual property, sharing of risks, that we already deal with together in the framework of the G-20. The respect for those principles is obviously essential, simply because they allow for a mutually beneficial partnership, and an increased financial sustainability, and therefore success of the projects engaged. . . .

“This will be the object of my exchanges with President Xi Jinping to define the agenda of trust that I hope we can put together.

“I know some will say that this agenda of trust must create equilibrium between a developed country and a developing one. But China is no longer a developing country; it is a country which is largely bypassing that. Therefore, we must reinvent here also the terms of a new relationship, and the Silk Roads are the expression of that new relationship of China to the world.

“I propose to identify very concretely the political framework in which we can build that partnership, that cooperation and common strategy . . . I am profoundly convinced that if Europe and China know how to establish that goal together, . . . this trust initiative could be the occasion of pragmatically relaunching the multilateralism which is today lacking in concrete accomplishments.

“I am ready to play a key role in this direction, making sure that the European countries progress in unity, because China needs a solid interlocutor to exchange and build its own initiative. I want the Silk Roads not to be limited to economic questions, but to be enlightened in Europe by a deep comprehension of China.



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President Macron, speaking at the Daming Palace in Xi'an, China, Jan. 8.

All the resources must be used to this end, from the world of publishing to the world of theater and cinema; from the well-recognized pioneering of the French Sinology school, to the world of arts. You have understood it. My outlook is indeed, in that framework, that France and Europe take full responsibility and meet the proposal offered by China.”

Macron continued, saying that a few days ago he visited the panda offered by China to Mrs. Macron. Other than the pleasure he and his family got from this gift, he looked closer to see if something there could inspire his trip to China. He didn't have to look for a long time, he said. “His very name enlightened me. The little panda's name is indeed *Yuang Meng*, ‘the realization of a dream.’ We live in a world where France and China can allow themselves to dream together.”

Macron: I Will Come To China At Least Once A Year

“Trust is built progressively. I also know that the character for wisdom in Chinese, is ‘to listen.’ Therefore I have decided to adopt a method: To say things as I said them to you today, to try define an objective. We will try to do this with President Xi Jinping, with a clear method of listening, proposing to progress and build confidence.

“At the heart of our two nations, the spirit which will make the world of tomorrow into a world at the level of the challenges of humanity, must grow. It is this spirit that I want to share with you, build with you, construct with you. Our grand past gives us an insatiable taste for the future and this future awaits us. It needs France, Europe, and a China that is respected and listened to. We are the memory of the world; it is up to us to decide to be the future.”