

JEAN-FRANÇOIS COPE

Mayor of Meaux, former delegate Minister of the Budget, France

PARK In-kook

Our last speaker will be the Mayor of Meaux, Jean-François Copé. He served as a spokesman of the government and also Minister of Budget and has served as a professor at Sciences-Po and associate professor at the University of Paris 8. With the various inclinations of his dynamic background, he will present some thoughts on One Belt, One Road, the modern version of the Silk Road, and the role of the European Union.

Jean-François COPÉ

Thank you very much. It is a great privilege to be with you, a great privilege to be the last speaker and a great privilege to be the only European speaker about all these issues. I would be very happy to share some personal thoughts with you about the lessons we can draw from the last Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Coming from a European point of view, it is very interesting to see how the Chinese authorities, as you were describing, gave a sort of framework about what they want for China for these next three decades.

Two objectives. The first one is to say that China is going to be the first power in the world by 2050. Second, we are going to bring you to a framework of what the strategic relations can be with the non-American world. This is very interesting, because the Chinese authorities and President Xi Jinping, gave for that a very brilliant idea, which is this very famous Silk Road. We like the name in French, 'One Belt, One Road'. It is a sort of new Marshall Plan for the 21st century and I think that all of us should put a great focus on this project. When you look at it, it is unstoppable. First, because there is one criterion that makes sure that this is going to be successful. That is a total alignment of interests between all the shareholders.

I was listening to what Mr. Cooper was saying about the difficulties that the American policy has to be on the table, because of what happened a year ago. According to me, there is a very interesting contrast between what is going on in the United States and the fact that at the same time the Chinese authorities are putting a real new deal for all of us on the table. I say for all of us, because when you look at the layout of this project, it includes China, of course, but also the other Asian countries, which are very happy to be included in something that will bring economic growth and development. It includes the Arab countries, which have the opportunity to diversify their own oil supply and their investments for the funds. It includes as well, of course, Europe, which has been launching very important structural reforms at the same time, in Germany, Spain, Italy, Northern Europe, and France, for the last six months.

We can imagine that there is a real, very interesting new deal for all of us. What is very original, and it is in contrast with the old 2,000-year old Silk Road, there is also, and this is very interesting a seaway coming from the Chinese ports, then Indonesia, Singapore, after the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, the Mediterranean Sea, and the two roads are going through Venice, which as everybody knows here, is the city of lovers. It is a way for us to remember that inside of this plan there is trade, economic development, and growth. There is also a very important cultural dimension that brings all three billion citizens inside this perimeter, who are now driven to say that they can share culture, education, science, technology.

It is a real, new deal for all of us. Coming from a Chinese point of view, I can imagine this is, of course, very interesting, but it is also very interesting from a European point of view. We are now looking at how we can be more useful. As you know, in Europe we have some problems in having a common defence policy, a diplomatic policy that can be accessible to everybody. We have the opportunity to do it now, because, again, the alignment of interest against terrorism, drug trafficking, against the way we have to bring peace and stability in many areas of the world, North Korea, of course, but also in the Middle East. It brings us to work all together and there is no better way to work all together than with the economy and trade.



Of course, there is always a downside. We also have to put on the table the hurdles we have to tackle, the impediments and of course, we have several in mind. I will give you just three examples. First, the overheating of the Chinese economy, which is not a small problem. It is a major problem for all of us when a country like China reaches something like 250% of debt out of the GDP. It is a global problem, not only a Chinese problem.

The second impediment is the question of the environment. We know that everybody, in China, Asia, globally, in Europe, we really want to see how we can be more efficient in preserving sustainable development. Of course, I, like everybody, disagreed with the position of President Trump. In fact, what is going on in China today is worrying for all of us on environmental questions, and I think that we must keep that in mind.

The third impediment, which is probably the most difficult, is the question of protectionism. In my opinion, we cannot imagine the success of this Silk Road project, if we do not keep in mind the question of reciprocity. We must take that into account, because if the trade between China and Europe is not fair, we will not be able to be successful. We have lots of incidents between us: the question of ports; of companies that are not taken over because of diplomatic problems; solar panels. I really think that the question of reciprocity and trade rules, are the main priority today.

I will conclude, with a word about one thing, which I think is very important. This project is a great ambition for all of us, but it is also a way for us to put three drivers on the table, which are very important for all of us. The first is education and culture. We do have a fantastic opportunity to know more about each other. Personally, I support the development of Chinese language teaching in France, to see that our next generation of children will be able to know more about this culture, and we have to be prepared for it as European citizens, which will be the first country in the world within three decades.

The second driver is technology: Artificial Intelligence, blockchain, big data. We are all concerned, and we have many things to share. We all know that we have engineers and scientists on all these questions and, of course, even if we are a bit late in Europe, we are now very determined in the way we can improve and spend much more on public and private research to reach a good level and scale on these questions. The third and last is diplomacy. As I told you previously, we have common interests, because we have common enemies. I think that good diplomacy is diplomacy where you can put common values, but also common interests on the table. Our cultural models are very far apart on many questions, so we will not be able to solve all the questions, there are too many differences: human rights; Tibet; Taiwan. We know all about that, but there are common interests. Again, what is going on with terrorists, drug trafficking, all the questions we have to tackle. We have common interests, and this can bring us to a new diplomacy.

I think that the European Union today is ready, provided it has its own capacity to continue and intensify the structural reforms, to be at a good level to be one of the major partners for China and Asia. This is a great opportunity and waiting for our American friends to be on top of this question, after maybe waiting some years, we have the time to do it on our own terms. Thank you.

PARK In-kook

Thank you, Mr Copé. You made a very excellent, comprehensive suggestion with a fresh view from the European Union. If I may, I'd like to press you to develop an idea on how the European integration model could be applied to East Asian integration, based on your experience.

Jean-François COPÉ

On immigration?

PARK In-kook

No, no, integration.