



# EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue: Speech of President Xi Jinping

*Bruges, Belgium  
01/04/2014*

Your Majesties King Philippe and Queen Mathilde,  
President Herman Van Rompuy,  
Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo,  
President Iñigo MÉNDEZ DE VIGO,  
Rector Jorg Monar,  
Diplomatic Envoys,  
Faculty Members,  
Students,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Friends,

Good morning.

It is a great pleasure for me to come to the College of Europe and meet with faculty members and students. First of all, my warm greetings and best wishes to you and all those in Europe who have shown interest in and support to the development of China.

In the Flemish language, Bruges means "bridge". A bridge not only makes life more convenient; it could also be a symbol of communication, understanding and friendship. I have come to Europe to build, together with our European friends, a bridge of friendship and cooperation across the Eurasian continent.

Before coming here, I visited a Volvo plant in Ghent together with King Philippe and Queen Mathilde. Volvo Cars Ghent, the largest car manufacturer in Belgium, has become a model of economic and technological cooperation between China, Belgium and Sweden. It has actually set up a bridge linking Chinese investment with European technology. What it leads to is mutual benefit and win-win cooperation.

The College of Europe was created after the end of World War II as a result of people's reflection of the war and their yearning for peace. Human history has far too often been haunted by the specter of war. Having suffered from the calamity of World War II, people in Europe began to think over about their past misery and started to unite, under the leadership of statesmen like Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, in a joint pursuit for lasting peace and prosperity.

Today, after more than 50 years of development, the College of Europe has not only served as an important think tank for the European Union, but also become the cradle of political elites of Europe. In the words of Mr. Van Rompuy, the College has always been “at the heart of European integration” and is in itself an expression of the faith in Europe born “out of the ruins of war”.

Faculty Members,  
Students,

In 1949 when the College of Europe was established, the People’s Republic of China was founded, heralding a new historical era in the development of the Chinese nation. Later in 1975, late Chinese premier Zhou Enlai and Sir Christopher Soames, acting on their assessment of the world situation then, decided that China and the European Economic Community should establish diplomatic relations. Today, China and the EU have a comprehensive strategic partnership. We have established dialogue and consultation mechanisms in over 60 areas. Our trade last year reached 559.1 billion US dollars. Over five million visits are exchanged each year. And about 300,000 of our students are studying overseas either in Europe or in China. The relationship between China and the EU has become one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world.

Having said that, we should not forget that there is still greater room for the growth of China-EU relations and the potential is yet to be fully tapped. To move our relationship forward, China needs to know more about Europe, and Europe needs to know more about China. For any country in the world, the past always holds the key to the present and the present is always rooted in the past. Only when we know where a country has come from, could we possibly understand why the country is what it is today, and only then could we realize to which direction it is heading.

So let me use this opportunity to describe to you what a country China is. I hope it will be helpful to you as you try to observe, understand and study China. Of course, a thorough account of the country would be too big a topic for today, so I will just focus on the following few features of China.

First, China has a time-honored civilization. Of the world’s ancient civilizations, the Chinese civilization has spanned over 5,000 years and continued uninterrupted to this day. The Chinese characters, invented by our ancestors several millennia ago, are still used today. Over 2,000 years ago, there was an era of great intellectual accomplishments in China, which is referred to as “the period of one hundred masters and schools of thought”. Great thinkers such as Laozi, Confucius and Mozi, to name just a few, explored a wide range of topics from the universe to the Earth, and from man’s relations with nature to relations amongst human beings and to that between the individual and society. The extensive and profound schools of thought they established covered many important ideas, such as the moral injunction of fidelity to one’s parents and brothers and to the monarch and friends, the sense of propriety, justice, integrity and honor, the emphasis on benevolence and kindness towards fellow human beings and the belief that man should be in harmony with nature, follow nature’s course and constantly pursue self-perfection. These values and teachings still carry a profound impact on Chinese people’s way of life today, underpinning the unique value system in the Chinese outlook of the world, of society and of life itself. And this unique and time-honored intellectual legacy has instilled a strong sense of national confidence in the Chinese people and nurtured a national spirit with patriotism at the very core.

Second, China has gone through many vicissitudes. For several thousand years before the industrial revolution, China had been leading the world in economic, technological and cultural development. However, feudal rulers of the 18th and 19th centuries closed the door of China in boastful ignorance, and China was since left behind in the trend of development and subdued to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. As a result of incessant foreign invasions thereafter, China experienced great social turmoil and its people had to lead a life of extreme destitution. Poverty prompted the call for change and people experiencing turmoil aspired for stability. After a hundred years of persistent and unyielding struggle, the Chinese people, sacrificing the loss of tens of millions of lives, ultimately took their destiny back into their own hands. Nevertheless, the memory of foreign invasion and bullying has never been erased from the minds of the Chinese people, and that explains why we cherish so dear the life we lead today. The Chinese people want peace; we do not want war. This is the reason why China follows an independent foreign policy of peace. China is committed to non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, and China will not allow others to interfere in its own affairs. This is the position we have upheld in the past. It is what we will continue to uphold in the future.

Third, China is a socialist country with Chinese characteristics. In 1911, the revolution led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen overthrew the autocratic monarchy that had ruled China for several thousand years. But once the old system was gone, where China would go became the question. The Chinese people then started exploring long and hard for a path that would suit China's national conditions. They experimented with constitutional monarchy, imperial restoration, parliamentarism, multi-party system and presidential government, yet nothing really worked. Finally, China took on the path of socialism. Admittedly, in the process of building socialism, we have had successful experience and also made mistakes. We have even suffered serious setbacks. After the "reform and opening-up" was launched under the leadership of Mr. Deng Xiaoping, we have, acting in line with China's national conditions and the trend of the times, explored and blazed a trail of development and established socialism with Chinese characteristics. Our aim is to build a socialist market economy, democracy, an advanced culture, a harmonious society and a sound eco-system, uphold social equity and justice, promote all-round development of the people, pursue peaceful development, complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and eventually achieve modernization and prosperity for all. The uniqueness of China's cultural tradition, history and circumstances determines that China needs to follow a development path that suits its own reality. In fact, we have found such a path and achieved success along this path.

Fourth, China is the world's biggest developing country. China has made historic progress in development. It is now the second largest economy in the world. It has achieved in several decades what took developed countries several centuries to achieve. This is, without doubt, a proud achievement for a country whose population exceeds 1.3 billion. In the meantime, we are clearly aware that the large size of the Chinese economy, when divided by 1.3 billion, sends China to around the 80th place in terms of per capita GDP. In China, over 74 million people rely on basic living allowances; each year, more than 10 million urban people would join the job market and several hundred million rural people need to be transferred to non-agricultural jobs and settle down in urban areas; more than 85 million people are with disabilities; and more than 200 million people are still living under the poverty line set by the World Bank, and that is roughly the population of France, Germany and the UK combined. In the 40-day-long season of the last Chinese New Year, China's airlines, railroads and highways transported 3.6 billion passengers, which means 90 million people were on the move each day. Therefore, to make the lives of the 1.3 billion Chinese people more comfortable requires still arduous efforts for years to come.

Economic development remains the top priority for China, and we still need to work on that basis to achieve social progress in all areas.

Fifth, China is a country undergoing profound changes. Our ancestors taught us that "as heaven maintains vigor through movement, a gentleman should constantly strive for self-perfection", and that "if one can make things better for one day, he should make them better every day". Being faced with fierce international competition is like sailing against the current. One either forges ahead or falls behind. Reform, which was first forced upon us by problems, goes deeper in addressing the problems. We know keenly that reform and opening-up is an ongoing process that will never stop. China's reform has entered a deep water zone, where problems crying to be resolved are all difficult ones. What we need is the courage to move the reform forward. To use a Chinese saying, we must "get ready to go into the mountain, being fully aware that there may be tigers to encounter". The principle we have laid down for reform is to act with courage while moving forward with steady steps. As we say in China, he who wants to accomplish a big and difficult undertaking should start with easier things first and make sure that all details are attended to. With the deepening of reform, China will continue to undergo profound changes. I believe that our efforts of deepening reform comprehensively will not only provide strong momentum for China's modernization drive, but also bring new development opportunities to the world.

To observe and understand China properly, one needs to bear in mind both China's past and present and draw reference from both China's accomplishments and the Chinese way of thinking. The 5,000-year-long Chinese civilization, the 170-year struggle by the Chinese people since modern times, the 90-year-plus journey of the Communist Party of China, the 60-year-plus development of the People's Republic and the 30-year-plus reform and opening-up should all be taken into account. They each make an integral part of China's history, and none should be taken out of the historical context. One can hardly understand China well without a proper understanding of China's history, culture, the Chinese people's way of thinking and the profound changes taking place in China today.

The world's development is multi-dimensional, and its history is never a linear movement. China cannot copy the political system or development model of other countries, because it would not fit us and it might even lead to catastrophic consequences. The Chinese people, over 2,000 year ago, had come to understand this from a simple fact that the tasty orange, grown in southern China, would turn sour once it is grown in the north. The fruit may look the same, but the taste is quite different, because the north means different location and different climate.

A French writer once said that friends are transparent to friends because they exchange life. I hope what I just shared with you could draw for you a more transparent picture of China. I also sincerely hope that the College of Europe will produce a large number of talents who know and understand China well so as to provide a constant source of talent and intellectual support for the growth of China-Europe relations.

Faculty Members,  
Students,

China and Europe may seem far apart geographically, but we are in fact in the same time and the same space. I even feel that we are close to each other, as if in the same neighborhood. Both China and Europe are in a crucial stage of development and facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges. As I just said, we hope to work with our European friends to build a bridge of friendship and cooperation across the Eurasian continent. For that, we need to build four bridges for peace, growth, reform and

progress of civilization, so that the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership will take on even greater global significance.

We need to build a bridge of peace and stability linking the two strong forces of China and the EU. Together, China and the EU take up one tenth of the total area on Earth and one fourth of the world's population. Together, we take three permanent seats on the Security Council of the United Nations. We all need peace, multilateralism and dialogue, instead of war, unilateralism and confrontation. We need to enhance communication and coordination on global issues, and play a key role in safeguarding world peace and stability. Civilization and culture can spread, so can peace and development. China stands ready to work with the EU to let the sunlight of peace drive away the shadow of war and the bonfire of prosperity warm up the global economy in the cold early spring, and enable the whole mankind to embark on the path of peaceful development and win-win cooperation.

We need to build a bridge of growth and prosperity linking the two big markets of China and the EU. China and the EU are the two most important major economies in the world with our combined economy accounting for one third of the global economy. We must uphold open market, speed up negotiations on the investment agreement, actively explore the possibility of a free trade area, and strive to achieve the ambitious goal of bringing two-way trade to one trillion US dollars by 2020. We should also study how to dovetail China-EU cooperation with the initiative of developing the Silk Road economic belt so as to integrate the markets of Asia and Europe, energize the people, businesses, capital and technologies of Asia and Europe, and make China and the EU the twin engines for global economic growth.

We need to build a bridge of reform and progress linking the reform processes in China and the EU. Both China and the EU are pursuing reforms that are unprecedented in human history, and both are sailing uncharted waters. We may enhance dialogue and cooperation on macro-economy, public policy, regional development, rural development, social welfare and other fields. We need to respect each other's path of reform, draw upon each other's reform experience and promote world development and progress through our reform efforts.

We need to build a bridge of common cultural prosperity linking the two major civilizations of China and Europe. China represents in an important way the Eastern civilization, while Europe is the birthplace of the Western civilization. The Chinese people are fond of tea and the Belgians love beer. To me, the moderate tea drinker and the passionate beer lover represent two ways of understanding life and knowing the world, and I find them equally rewarding. When good friends get together, they may want to drink to their heart's content to show their friendship. They may also choose to sit down quietly and drink tea while chatting about their life. In China, we value the idea of preserving "harmony without uniformity", and here in the EU people stress the need to be "united in diversity". Let us work together for all flowers of human civilizations to blossom together.

In spite of changes in the international landscape, China has always supported European integration and a bigger role in international affairs by a united, stable and prosperous EU. China will soon release its second EU policy paper to reiterate the high importance it places on the EU and on its relations with the EU. Last year, China and the EU jointly formulated the China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, setting out a host of ambitious goals for China-EU cooperation in nearly 100 areas. The two sides should work in concert to turn the blueprint into reality at an early date and strive for greater progress in China-EU relations in the coming decade.

Faculty Members,  
Students,

The College of Europe has, in recent years, placed increasing importance on China. It has opened courses on Europe-China relations. It is also busy preparing for the launch of a Europe-China research center devoted to studies of Europe-China relations. China has decided to work with the College of Europe to build a “Chinese Library”, the first of its kind in an EU member country, and will provide, for the purpose of academic research, 10,000 books, videos and films on Chinese history, culture and the achievements China has made in various fields.

As we Chinese believe, one needs to not only read 10,000 books, but also travel 10,000 miles to know the world around us. I suggest that you go to China more often to see for yourselves what China is like. What you hear from others might be false, but what you see with your own eyes is real. China intends to work with the EU to bring the number of students exchanged between the two sides to 300,000 each year by 2020.

Young people are always energetic and full of dreams. They are the future of China, Europe and, indeed, of the world. I hope that Chinese and European students will perceive the world with equality, respect and love and treat different civilizations with appreciation, inclusiveness and the spirit of mutual learning. This way, you will promote mutual understanding and knowledge among the people of China, Europe and other parts of the world, and with your youthful energy and hard work, make our planet a better place to live in.

Thank you.