

CUTS International *Global Affairs*

Occasional News Wrap – #71/May 2024



Amid Global Tensions, China's President Embarks on a Mission to Revitalise Relationships in Europe

Chinese President's European Visit: A Will for Diplomatic Milestones

Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent five-day European tour, spanning France, Serbia, and Hungary, aimed at strengthening ties amidst shifting global dynamics. Amidst EU's de-risking efforts, Xi's strategic partnership agreement with Hungary signifies China's commitment to bolstering influence in Europe.

The deal highlights Hungary's alignment with Beijing and includes cooperation in energy, technology, and infrastructure. Xi's visit to Serbia emphasised China's support for nations discontented with the West. Despite mixed outcomes, the visit reflects China's diplomatic efforts to strengthen EU-China relations.

This edition of CUTS Occasional News Wrap (ONW) provides a comprehensive overview of the visit, covering articles and news from both print and electronic media.

News/Op-ed	Key Takeaway
<p>Xi uses Europe visit to slow continent’s ‘de-risking’ from China <i>Gabriel Dominguez</i> The Japan Times May 10, 2024</p>	<p>Chinese President Xi Jinping concluded an “all-weather” strategic partnership agreement with Hungary, capping off a three-nation diplomatic tour of Europe aimed at solidifying Beijing’s footprint on the continent and countering growing European “de-risking” efforts and national security-based restrictions.</p> <p>"We are willing to take this as a new starting point to push bilateral relations and pragmatic cooperation into a golden channel and move toward a higher level," Xi said in Budapest following a meeting with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.</p>
<p>President Xi’s European visit herald’s new era of ties <i>Xu Wei</i> Asia News Network May 13, 2024</p>	<p>President Xi Jinping's six-day European tour marked a significant boost in China's ties with France, Serbia, and Hungary. Signed agreements spanned various sectors including green development and aviation.</p> <p>Memorable moments included talks between Xi and Macron at Tourmalet. In Serbia, a joint statement on cooperation was signed, while in Hungary, a strategic partnership was established. The trip's impact on China-EU relations and bilateral cooperation was highlighted by analysts.</p>
<p>Chinese President Xi Jinping arrives in Hungary, the final stop of his European tour Euronews May 09, 2024</p>	<p>Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Hungary aims to strengthen economic ties, contrasting with EU efforts to reduce reliance on China. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, known for nationalist policies, welcomes Chinese investments, diverging from EU norms.</p> <p>Despite criticism, Hungary seeks cooperation with China, including on the Belt and Road Initiative. Xi's visit follows agreements with Serbia, raising concerns in Europe.</p>
<p>China's Xi celebrates warm Hungary ties on last stop of Europe visit France 24 May 09, 2024</p>	<p>Xi Jinping concludes his European tour with a state visit to Hungary, focusing on bolstering economic ties, particularly in electric vehicle manufacturing. Hungarian President Tamas Sulyok warmly welcomes Xi, emphasising their strong bilateral relationship.</p> <p>Despite tensions with the EU, Hungary provides a friendly environment for Xi, avoiding contentious issues. However, concerns linger among Hungarians regarding economic dependency on China and environmental consequences.</p>

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<p>Chinese President Xi’s trip to Europe: ‘Charm offensive’ or canny bid to divide the West?</p> <p><i>Laura King</i></p> <p>Los Angeles Times</p> <p>May 09, 2024</p>	<p>Chinese President Xi Jinping's European tour strategically balances charm and realpolitik, with stops in France, Serbia, and Hungary. Xi's gestures aim to deepen ties with both traditional European powers and autocratic allies while exploiting divisions within the EU.</p> <p>Despite nods to peace and trade cooperation, Xi's visit underscores China's intent to counter US influence and leverage regional grievances to its advantage.</p>
<p>Xi Jinping’s unproductive European tour</p> <p>Financial Times</p> <p>May 09, 2024</p>	<p>Xi Jinping's recent European tour contrasts sharply with his 2019 charm offensive. Amid China's economic slowdown and geopolitical tensions, Xi seeks to maintain market access while exploiting EU divisions.</p> <p>Despite some conciliatory gestures, he offers no trade concessions or assurances on security concerns. Europe must unite and employ tougher tactics to assert its economic and foreign policy interests against China.</p>
<p>Xi Jinping In Europe: Seeking to Win Friends and Influence People</p> <p><i>Harsh V Pant</i></p> <p>NDTV</p> <p>May 09, 2024</p>	<p>During Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Europe, he seeks to strengthen ties amid tensions with the US. Divisions within Europe are evident, with some nations embracing Chinese investment while others raise concerns about trade practices and geopolitical influence.</p> <p>As Europe navigates these complexities, India sees a unified European stance as crucial for global geopolitics, hoping to maintain strong engagement with the continent.</p>
<p>Hungary and China sign strategic cooperation agreement during visit by Chinese President Xi</p> <p><i>Bela Szandelszky</i></p> <p>AP News</p> <p>May 10, 2024</p>	<p>During Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Hungary, new agreements were signed to strengthen economic ties. Prime Minister Orbán pledged to facilitate Chinese investments and promote cooperation in technology.</p> <p>Hungary aims to become a hub for EV and battery manufacturing, aligning with China's Belt and Road Initiative. Despite minor protests, Hungary seeks deeper collaboration with China, including in nuclear energy.</p>

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<p>Chinese press reports on President Xi Jinping’s visit to Hungary</p> <p><i>Hetzmann Mercedesz</i></p> <p>Daily News Hungary</p> <p>May 08, 2024</p>	<p>The annual "Belt and Road" cooperation conference between China and Hungary commenced at Budapest's Vigadó Concert Hall, featuring Chinese folk music.</p> <p>Hungary and China celebrate progress in joint Belt and Road initiatives, with Hungary keen to deepen collaboration, affirmed by Minister Márton Nagy ahead of President Xi Jinping's visit. Nagy lauds the Bank of China's 21-year presence and China's strides in electric vehicle development.</p>
<p>China – Europe welcomes a true leader</p> <p><i>Luke Montgomery Zunga</i></p> <p>CAJ News Africa</p> <p>May 10, 2024</p>	<p>Western media criticised Chinese President Xi Jinping's visits to France, Serbia, and Hungary, questioning France's alignment with China amidst Russia's actions in Ukraine. However, France recognises China's growing global influence and seeks cooperation.</p> <p>Contrary to US politics, China maintains stability and seeks global partnerships. The emergence of BRICS signals a shift in global leadership. Divisions promoted by the US are unnecessary, prompting countries to reassess alliances.</p>
<p>CCP aims to divide the EU, report on Xi visit says</p> <p><i>Wu Che-yu and Jake Chung</i></p> <p>Taipei News</p> <p>May 12, 2024</p>	<p>Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent European tour, aiming to exploit divisions within the EU and sour EU-US relations.</p> <p>Xi seeks to woo countries like France, Serbia, and Hungary to bolster support for China and potentially hinder EU backing for Taiwan.</p> <p>Beijing aims to build an anti-US sentiment in Eastern Europe while impacting EU solidarity towards China.</p>