



Italy set to become first G7 country to join 'Belt and Road'

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Chinese President Xi meets Italian counterpart Mattarella

- Italy and China want to revive the spirit of the ancient Silk Road by deepening their trade and investment ties, Chinese President Xi Jinping said during a trip to that has raised eyebrows in Washington.
- Mr. Xi is set to sign a deal that will see Italy become the first member of the Group of Seven (G7) major industrialised nations to join China's "Belt and Road" infrastructure project (BRI), which is inspired by historic, centuries-old trade routes.
- Mr. Xi said the two countries should enhance cooperation in infrastructure, ports, logistics and maritime transport.
- Besides the BRI accord, various deals worth up to €7 billion (\$7.9 billion) are expected to be agreed, including agreements opening up the northern ports of Trieste and Genoa to Chinese containers.
- Italy's populist government is eager for such initiatives to get underway swiftly as it battles to revitalise a sickly economy, which has slipped into its third recession in a decade.

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