

The ‘Mackinder Mantra’ In U.S.-Russia Conflict

EIR’s Roger Moore interviewed Pino Alracchi, who was in his office in Strasbourg, France, by telephone from Wiesbaden, Germany, on March 13. Arlacchi is a Member of the European Parliament (EP), former member of the Italian Senate, and former head of the the UN Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC) in Vienna, which in 2001 succeeded in getting the Afghan Taliban government to stop almost all poppy planting. In 2010 and 2011, as Afghanistan Rapporteur for the EP, he worked out a plan with Viktor Ivanov, the head of the Russian Federal Drug Control Service, for eliminating the opium/heroin economy. The Russians “did their work,” and were ready go ahead, he told this reporter recently, but the European Commission killed the plan.

EIR: In February, and your later appearances on the Ukraine debates in the European Parliament, you were very dramatic in saying that the EU made a very grave and strategic mistake in treating Russia as an enemy, and it seems to be that it is still the case. Can you explain how this evolved, since we are now at the brink of a confrontation between the U.S. and the EU, on one side, and Russia on the other, with military strategic implications? How did we get into this mess?

Arlacchi: I am surprised and also appalled by this sudden change of orientation by the EU. With Russia, we have a strategic partnership in the area of energy, and we were at the point to negotiate a larger agreement that would include also other areas. We departed from that with a confrontation attitude vis-à-vis Russia. We had already made a mistake (but it was and is possible to correct it) in formulating this Eastern partnership, where we [the EU—ed.] focus on all countries that surround Russia, and not on Russia itself. This was the origin of the whole mistake and one of the origins of the current crisis.

We developed the set of Association Agreements and free-trade exchanges with all countries between

Europe and Russia, but not offering the same to Russia itself, or simply doing a different policy: I mean creating an area of trade between Lisbon and Vladivostok, that would make superfluous any kind of Association Agreement, country-by-country, for trade agreements.¹

This sudden change is due, I believe, mostly to the pressure of the USA; that is not evident, is not recognized, but I cannot find a different explanation, since the USA’s long-term strategy is to impede any rapprochement, any improvement of relations between Europe, particularly the Eastern part, and Russia.

This is what I call the “Mackinder Mantra,” applied carefully by all American administrations, theorized and updated by [Zbigniew] Brzezinski in his books. And I see this as a result of Halford Mackinder’s strategy, to impede at any cost the cooperation, or even the long-term unification between Europe and Russia.²

Call for a Eurasian Land-Bridge

EIR: Two days ago, the head of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, Academician Vladimir Fortov, and Vladimir Yakunin, the head of the Russian Railways, at the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow, called for a massive expansion of what is known as the Eurasian Land-Bridge of development corridors from the Atlantic to the Pacific, in Asia, including China; building up railroad systems, and then sponsoring industry within Russia. They didn’t mention Ukraine, but it would be obvious that a major 10-20-year infrastructure-development program is something that should be on the agenda. What would you think of a large-scale development project that links western Europe through Central Europe,

1. According to the EU, “Association Agreements are international agreements that the European Community/European Union has concluded with third countries with the aim of setting up an all-embracing framework to conduct bilateral relations. These agreements normally provide for the progressive liberalisation of trade (to various degrees: Free Trade Area, Customs Union).” Translation: the AAs are agreements with subject countries, such as those in Eastern Europe, allowing the imperial financiers unobstructed looting rights in those countries—ed.

2. Sir Halford J. Mackinder (1861-1947), Britain’s leading geopolitical theorist at the turn of the century, coined the term “Eurasian heartland,” the battle for which, he said, would determine who would control the world.

with Russia and Asia?

Arlacchi: That would be a great, great project and could be an infrastructure for peace and cooperation between the European Union and Russia. But there are also other ideas we could develop, particularly, this free-trade area, also free circulation of people, abolition of all visas for all the area covered by the free-trade agreement—it means all countries, Russia, all countries in between, also all European countries. These should be the ideas that should be discussed if people were concerned about long-term goals, and also the interests, European interests. No one here [in the European Parliament—ed.] considers what are our interests, short and long-term. Europe has all possible interests in cooperating with Russia, from economy to culture, because Russia is Europe.

Our economies, for instance, would enjoy many additional chances for development. We would have all the advantages from this agreement: It means resources, energy, and a huge market. Russia could have technology, financial supply, technological aid, technical and scientific cooperation, and vice versa. I asked my colleagues, the anti-Russian colleagues, could you please quote one, single, big issue that should divide us from Russia, just one, and the answer is LGBT rights!

EIR: Good reason to have World War III!

Arlacchi: It has some importance, but could not, for sure, be considered a long-term strategic issue, could not be considered something to last forever.

EIR: Over the last months, leading economists such as Simon Johnson and Joseph Stiglitz, have emphasized that the trans-Atlantic banking crisis of the megabanks—we call them the casino banks—has not been solved, the so-called too-big-too-fail problem. And



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Pino Arlacchi: "...I believe that we should start to use this crisis to reconsider, and to relaunch our long-term interest and friendship with Russia."

they have been adamant in calling for breaking up the banks and implementing what is known in the U.S. as the Glass-Steagall law. Here it would be called bank separation, and has different names in different countries. Were western Europe to work with Russia, it would need a credit system which could finance the real economy. What do you think, here within Europe, about the debate, or using the possibility of this cooperation with Russia to force a change in what leading economists consider a failed financial system?

Arlacchi: Yes, it is absolutely a good idea, but there is no discussion in Europe on this subject at the political level. But I believe that bank separation had existed in some European countries, and it has been refused in Italy—it did exist but was dismantled.

EIR: I think [European Central Bank head] Mario Draghi had something to do with that.

Arlacchi: Well, I am really not an expert, so I cannot contribute precisely, but I believe that this is a good idea. It was translated into law after the Great Depression in the USA, and turned out to be a powerful instrument of stabilization of the world economy, of reducing risk of bank collapse, and also giving impulse to the proper and productive use of the financial system that should exist to support industrial and productive expansion, and should not exist just to maintain its power at the expense of the other parts of the economy.

EIR: Is there anything else you would like to say, Professor Arlacchi?

Arlacchi: I don't think we are facing a war. I do not think there will be any war between the EU and Russia, but I believe that we should start to use this crisis to reconsider, and to relaunch our long-term interest and friendship with Russia.