
I. New Hope in the Old Continent

CONFERENCE: ITALY ON THE NEW SILK ROAD

Italy Leads Europe into the Coming New Paradigm

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

The following is the edited transcript of the March 13 address by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute, to the conference, “Italy on the New Silk Road,” in Milan, Italy, organized by MoviSol—the LaRouche movement in Italy—and the Lombardy regional administration.

It is in one sense quite amusing to see the high waves of reaction that the mere possibility of Italy signing the MOU with China is causing right now. Since Xi Jinping first announced the New Silk Road in 2013, and then proceeded to make treaties—I think it’s with 112 countries by now—enormous growth has ensued. With six major industrial corridors, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) became very quickly the largest infrastructure project in history—ever. And the strange thing was that for about four years, in the mainstream media in the United States and Europe, there was practically no reporting about it.

All of a sudden, in an obviously coordinated way, the major think tanks of Europe and the United States started a series of attacks, releasing studies alleging that China is causing countries to fall into a debt trap, in an effort to replace the United States as the dominant force in the world. These studies allege that with the BRI, China is becoming an imperialist force, that the Belt and Road projects are not viable, that China is an authoritarian system, and that Xi Jinping is a dictator. A barrage of attacks on the BRI concept was released all at once, suddenly.

The funny thing is, if you were to ask the leaders of the countries cooperating with the BRI—leaders from African, Asian, and Latin American countries—you would hear great praise for the BRI. They will tell you that with the Chinese cooperation, they have for the first



MoviSol/Flavio Tabanelli

Helga Zepp-LaRouche addressing the “Italy on the New Silk Road” conference in Milan.

time had the opportunity to overcome the underdevelopment and poverty they have suffered under Western colonialism, and 70 years of IMF conditionalities, which prevented them from having exactly that kind of development China is making possible. And they are full of praise, calling China a friend—a completely opposite view.

Western Media Coverage of China Is Fake News

I have come to the conclusion that everything the Western mainstream media are saying about China is fake news, just a lie. It comes from the fact that many in the West simply have lost the ability to imagine that any country, let alone China, could promote something that is, indeed, for the common good of all of humanity. When Xi Jinping talks about the “shared community of the common future of mankind,” or the “community of destiny,” he means it!

Isn’t it obvious that in the time of thermonuclear weapons, of international space travel, and the possibility of conquering all the problems of the world, that we have to think about the one humanity first, before we talk about national interests? As a matter of fact, the

concept of win-win cooperation for the Belt and Road Initiative, has all the economic aspects that are, in fact, beneficial to all the countries that have participated.

But the BRI is much more than that: Because, from the standpoint of the evolution of mankind, if you take a step back, and forget for a moment the current conflict between Marseille and Trieste, which I understand is obviously very important for the Italians, but if you look instead from the larger view, isn't it natural that infrastructure development would eventually open up all continents and connect them?

So now, all of a sudden, you have this eruption of anti-China propaganda. We are now at a point that something is happening—that has happened sixteen times before in history—the then dominant power was surpassed by the up-to-then second largest power. In history, this has twelve times led to war between those two competing powers, and in only four cases has the second power surpassed the dominant power without war.

China has emphasized many times that it doesn't want to follow the twelve examples in which this conflict led to war, and that it does not want to replace the United States in its role as the leader of a unipolar world. Rather, China wants to build a completely new system of international relations—based on sovereignty, on respect for the different social systems of other countries, and on non-interference. China is proposing a completely new system of international relations.

Only a New Paradigm Will Stop War

So, strategically we must indeed focus on the conflict brewing between the United States and Russia, because of the Russian reactions to the United States pulling out first from the ABM Treaty, and now the INF Treaty. Many now think that we are actually very close to war, that is, in a worse strategic crisis than during the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, because of the deteriorating relations between the United States and Russia.

But if you talk to some strategic insiders on both sides of the Atlantic, they easily admit that the much more dangerous conflict is actually the one between the United States and China: The question is whether the United States will accept the rise of Asia, and the Belt and Road Initiative is just the obvious expression of that. Add to that what the RAND Corporation said a couple of months ago—that it's better to have the war with China now, than in ten years, because the casualties will be less.

This is something we must urgently change. I think that the best way to change it is, indeed, is to bring in this growing new paradigm of thinking—we have to

completely abandon geopolitics. We have to abandon the idea that there can be any natural interest of one country, or a group of countries, against another bloc of countries. This geopolitical idea is what led twice to world war in the 20th century.

As a matter of fact, I think the potential to overcome these conflicts is absolutely there. I know in Europe, many people faint when you mention the name of President Donald Trump, but President Trump is not seeking confrontation with Russia—as a matter of fact, he wants to have an improved relation with Russia, which he demonstrated at the July 16, 2018 summit with President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki. And despite the present trade tension, President Trump always talks about President Xi Jinping as his very good friend, and China being a great country, and that he wants to have a good relationship between the United States and China.

The attacks on Italy, were reported as coming from the White House. The *Financial Times* sourced the statement to Garrett Marquis, a spokesperson for the National Security Council. Those attacks do not represent President Trump's view. Those attacks come from a neo-con grouping that is, unfortunately, inside the Trump Administration.

The factional situation in the United States is quite severe. The Democrats and the neo-cons are trying to get Trump out of office with Russiagate. Nonetheless, President Trump has proven a tremendous sustainability against the efforts to drive him out of office, and his supporters are absolutely backing him. The chances that there will be a second Trump Administration are actually very, very high.

One of the accusations against China and the Belt and Road Initiative is that it would divide Europe. I think everybody knows Europe is already divided, without China. The EU austerity policy has created a North-South conflict. That austerity policy has impoverished, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. The same austerity policy meant providing no development help to the East European countries, so those countries are now happy to cooperate with the BRI, because the EU did not provide them anything.

Italy as a Role Model for Unity and Cooperation

Europeans are also divided on the migrant issue. Look at the division between East and West—the East European countries do not want to have any part of the proposed quota system of the EU.

What Italy is actually doing in this context, is a role model. The kind of collaboration between Italian firms and Chinese firms in the development of Africa is actu-

ally the only human way to address the refugee crisis.

As of now, thirteen European countries have signed MOUs with China; Italy will be the first G7 country to sign up. Let us also note that the G7 is really overrated. It is no longer as important as the G20, for example.

Italy has many ports—Mr. Geraci said that many of the European ports want to be hubs between not only the New Silk Road land routes, but also hubs along the Maritime Silk Road. For example, Spain and Portugal want to become hubs for all the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries around the world. So there is a completely changed attitude that is developing very quickly.

Even in Germany and France, the two countries now trying the hardest to put the brakes on collaboration with the BRI (apart from the EU Commission), there are many cities that recognize their own self-interest in cooperating with the Belt and Road Initiative. Three German states—Schleswig-Holstein, Bavaria, and Brandenburg—quite frequently have large delegations travelling back and forth to China. In many German cities, mayors are now strongly advocating cooperation with China. The dynamic is increasing more rapidly than you might think.

I think the perspective of unifying Europe is present, not necessarily under the EU bureaucracy, but rather in something much closer to French President Charles de Gaulle's conception of "Europe of the Fatherlands," this time with China, with Russia, with the Belt and Road Initiative, the Eurasian Economic Union, and European countries fully cooperating with each other in this new paradigm. That is my prognosis.

I think that that is also the only way Europe can impact the strategic situation. If you had a united Europe of the Fatherlands cooperating with the Belt and Road Initiative, including Germany and France, that would be the best way to get the United States to also give up its opposition—which as I said, is not coming from Trump, but from the other forces I mentioned—and get the United States to join the new paradigm.

I think this is the *only* hope we have to avoid a catastrophe ending in a third world war, this time with nuclear weapons, meaning the extinction of civilization. So in that sense, what Italy is doing right now, is of the greatest historical importance, because Italy, with what you here are doing, with the MOU but also with joint ventures with China in Africa, can become the role model for all the other European countries.

The Cultural, Moral Dimension

The New Silk Road is not merely an economic concept. Infrastructure and all of the assorted kinds of in-

vestment in the BRI are extremely important as the backbone of development, but there is also the much more, and not so well-known cultural, moral dimension, which is best expressed in the fact that the Chinese approach to the New Silk Road is based on Confucian theory—that you absolutely must have harmony among all the nations, each developing in a harmonious way.

And when some think tanks say that there is now a competition of systems between the Western liberal model and the state-guided model of the Chinese state economy, well, what they really mean is that China has developed its policy based on a Confucian orientation, which means that the state is also in charge of the moral improvement of its population through aesthetical education. As a matter of fact, Xi Jinping has said repeatedly that he puts the highest emphasis on aesthetical education, because such education results in the "beauty of the mind" and the "beauty of the soul."

The reason why some in the West regard that as competition, is that Western neo-liberal and liberal philosophy has moved away from that conception of harmony. We are no longer humanists. We no longer think as we did during the Italian Renaissance or the German Classical period. Rather, we have replaced that idea of beautiful harmony with "liberal" thinking best described as "everything is allowed," every degenerate form of culture is allowed, everything goes.

I don't want to elaborate further on this point right now. But, I must say, if you consider the violence and pornography in our entertainment, we don't have to worry: We will lose that competition of the systems, simply because we, in the so-called liberal West, are not taking care of our future generations, but instead we are allowing them to completely decay morally.

And that is why I think that we have to understand that the only way Europe can persist in the coming future is not through military power—Mr. Macron's proposal of a "true European army" is ridiculous—but we will preserve our European culture *only* if we return to the greatest traditions in our own history, meaning reviving the spirit and the ideas and principles of the Italian Renaissance, of the Ecole Polytechnique of France, of the German Classical music, literature, and poetry. Only if we rise again to our best traditions can we persist in the coming world.

The cultural dimension of the New Silk Road is as important, if not more important, than the question of economics.

I will be happy to take your questions. Thank you.