

Will Italy Finally Build the Longest Suspension Bridge in the World?

by Claudio Celani

April 8—The “heterogony of ends” is an expression formulated in 1886 by German Psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, although the concept was originally formulated by Italian statesman Niccolò Machiavelli in his *Discorsi sopra la decade di Tito Livio* (*Discourse on the Ten Books of Livy*). It describes a phenomenon in which an action aiming at a determined goal, ends up generating different and sometimes opposite results.

This is the case of the “Next Generation EU” policy established by the European Commission and adopted by EU national leaders in 2020, with the goal of deindustrializing the European continent under the pretext of saving the planet from climate change. The NGEU includes a 750 billion Resilience and Recovery Fund which is supposed to finance, with grants and loans, transition from the “carbon economy” into a supposed “carbon free” economy in two phases by 2050. The real aim of such a “green transition” however, is to roll over the debt of the collapsing financial system by creating a \$30-50 trillion new bubble. This bubble would be funded by taxpayers, whose consent would be obtained by “saving the planet” rhetoric.

However, what boils in the Devil’s pot eventually attracts notice.

In order to guarantee that the nation of Italy complies with the “green” transition scheme and thus ensures the continuation of the Euro system, a technocratic government was established in Rome last December, led by former European Central Bank (ECB) chairman Mario Draghi, who is now indeed prime minister. The coup

was a concerted action by Italian pro-EU circles around State President Sergio Mattarella and their allies in the European Parliament, in cahoots with the EU Commission, Berlin and Paris. Using the blackmail of ECB support for Italian sovereign bonds, almost all national parliamentary factions were convinced to back a cabinet filled with technocrats loyal to the financial oligarchy. But in order to sell its fascist scheme to public opinion,



Stretto di Messina SpA

An artist's concept of the Messina Bridge to connect Sicily with the Italian mainland.

the NGEU plan contains recommendations that sound progressive, such as promoting investments in climate-friendly railway connections and assigning priority to less developed areas in the EU.

This has offered a flank for Italian patriots to demand a development plan for Southern Italy (Mezzogiorno), pivoted by the strategically key connection between Sicily and the mainland.

Missing Link to Sicily

Such a connection is the missing link for one of the key European transport corridors, the “Scandinavian-

Mediterranean” [corridor](#) which stretches from Finland and Sweden in the North, to the island of Malta in the South, taking in Denmark, Northern, Central and Southern Germany, the industrial heartlands of Northern Italy and the southern Italian ports. The most significant projects on the corridor are the Fehmarnbelt Fixed Link, the Brenner Base Tunnel and the Messina-Reggio Calabria (Messina Strait) fixed link, including the access routes. Whereas the Fehmarnbelt Tunnel and the Brenner Base Tunnel are under construction, the Sicily-Mainland link is still up in the air.



cc/ECB



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Prime Minister Mario Draghi (left) and his Minister of Infrastructure, Enrico Giovannini, a Club of Rome member and follower of the Great Green Reset policy, are avoiding a commitment to resume construction of the Messina Bridge.

The idea of a bridge over the Strait of Messina is as old as the Roman Empire, but concrete projects were drafted and approved after World War II and adopted by various Italian governments starting in the 1970s. Finally, in 2011 the Berlusconi-Tremonti government started constructing the Bridge, but work was stopped and the project canceled by the austerity government of Mario Monti (also installed by an EU coup).

Now, funds offered by the Resilience and Recovery Fund (RRF) for nominally “climate-friendly” infrastructures are giving the Messina Bridge a tremendous opportunity. If the Italian government wants to apply for RRF grants, it must present a credible investment plan, with infrastructures ready to be financed and start right away. The only major infrastructure which is at such a stage of executive project is ... the Messina Bridge!

However, the Draghi government remains non-committal on including the Bridge in the list of investments to be submitted to the EU Commission; and two of his ministers, Infrastructure Minister Enrico Giovannini and Minister Mara Carfagna, Minister for the South and Territorial Cohesion, have put forward the formalistic argument that because the EU Commission set a 2026 deadline for completion of the projects, the Bridge would not qualify, because it will not be finished in time.

Experts such as former government official Ercole Incalza have rebutted such an argument, insisting that €2 billion in grants from the RFF can be used to fi-

nance works “around the Bridge” which can be very well finished by 2026, and the Bridge as such can be financed by drawing €3 billion from the EU “cohesion funds,” i.e., part of the money that Italy pays annually to the EU budget and gets partially back as funds for its less developed areas.

Inside the government, representatives from at least three parties (Lega, Forza Italia, and Italia Viva) are in favor of the Bridge, while one (Democratic Party) is split, and the anti-progress party M5S is against it. Prime Minister Draghi has so far avoided a showdown in his cabinet and, through Minister Giovannini, has hidden behind the excuse that he is waiting for a report shortly to be delivered by a commission established by the previous government. That commission is expected to give a “Pontius Pilate”-like response.

Draghi’s is a horror cabinet from the standpoint of the well being of the nation of Italy. He has given “saving the planet” equal priority with “saving the euro” in his government program. Shortly before being appointed prime minister, he had authored a G30 (Group of 30) paper calling for “creative destruction” to be implemented after the pandemic, in order to save only “climate sustainable” economic activities and suppress all the others. The key posts in his cabinet, such as Finance, Infrastructure, Innovation, and the newly established “Ministry for Ecological Transition” have all been given to members of the climate cult and allied investment bankers. The above-men-

tioned Infrastructure Minister, Enrico Giovannini, for instance, is a Club of Rome member, and he organized for abused child Greta Thunberg of Sweden to address the Italian Parliament in 2019. Giovannini is a follower of the “creative destruction” cult as well, and compared the Great Reset policy to U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal!

Pressure from Industry

Nevertheless, Draghi must reckon with the business community as one of his constituencies. If he wants to survive long in the government, he will have to concede to them the Bridge and other vital infrastructure, such as the extension of Italy’s high-speed railways to Southern Italy and to Sicily.

That is why scientific and business forces have mobilized to put maximum pressure on the government:

Under the direction of Schiller Institute friend Enzo Siviero, an engineer and architect internationally known as “the Bridge Builder,” **more than 150 professors in Italian universities** got together into a group called *Lettera 150* (Letter 150) and issued a call on the government to build the Bridge and the other infrastructures in Southern Italy.

A bipartisan parliamentary group has been formed, composed by members of Lega, Forza Italia, and Italia Viva (Renzi), to endorse the Bridge project;

Webuild, the largest construction firm in Italy, and contractor for the Bridge project, has produced a beautiful video on the Bridge, presenting it as an engine of development and a technical jewel.

The *Lettera 150* group has drafted a memorandum of understanding that will be signed by the presidents of the regional administrations of Sicily and Calabria, the two regions which the Bridge will join together, after the Easter holidays. The long paper drafted by *Lettera 150* describes the Bridge as a strategic infrastructure, because “through the connection between Sicily and Calabria, the “Berlin-Palermo European Corridor would be completed,” and it would create “conditions to have the Sicilian port system (Augusta, Catania, Palermo, and Messina) finally assume its natural role in the Mediterranean, as a fundamental logistical hub at the



The Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor of the Trans-European Transport Network. The Messina Bridge—between Sicily and the tip of the Italian boot (area not shown)—will be a key link in this transport corridor, and relevant for the development of Africa.

center of major world trade routes.” Their second point: “Only an economic shock, through filling the infrastructure gap among the different regions of Italy, can allow general growth that makes present and future government debt sustainable, including Recovery Fund loans.”

The newly formed parliamentary bipartisan group identifies itself in a statement as “A parliamentary intergroup, made up of several components of national politics: This will be ‘Bridge on the Strait—Italian Recovery and Development Starting from the South.’ An alliance aimed at Italian infrastructure development starting from the Mezzogiorno, which ... is meant as an expression of social-economic potentiality.”

The six-minute Webuild [video](#) presents the Bridge as a major source of payroll: It will create 118,000 jobs and “will attract Mediterranean world trade toward Italy.” It will “turn Southern Italy into the logistical pole of the EU and will promote the know-how of Italian companies involved.”

The Messina link will be the longest single-span suspension bridge in the world, with a total length of 3,660 meters and a central span of 3,300 meters. It will also be the tallest, with towers 399 meters high. The deck will be the widest at 61 meters. It will require 1.5 million tons of concrete and 376,000 tons of steel. It will carry 60,000 trains and 6 million vehicles per year. Webuild is Italy's major construction and engineering firm, which built the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the second Panama Canal. Last year, they built the new Genoa highway bridge in less than 12 months.

The False Alternative Bridge/Tunnel

Last year, as the pro-Bridge campaign was already getting up steam, the M5S-dominated second Conte government established a committee of experts to examine an alternative to the Bridge, namely a submerged floating tunnel (SFT). This was a clear delaying tactic, as the option of a SFT had already been examined by experts in the eighties, and it was concluded that a suspension bridge was the best option.

An SFT is not a bad idea in itself, and it might be built in the future in addition to the Bridge. However, replacing the Bridge with an SFT now would mean to start from zero and postpone the construction of a fixed link between Sicily and the Italian mainland by at least a decade. Not only is the Bridge project ready, but construction was begun in 2011, only to be stopped by economic hitman Mario Monti. On March 27 of this year, Webuild CEO Pietro Salini said Webuild can be ready to resume construction in six months.

However, the SFT, or "Archimedes Bridge," is a unique technology that can be used for other projects, such as the Italy-Albania fixed link. This connection would complete what Enzo Siviero calls "The Ulysses Corridor." (See Enzo Siviero's [article](#), "Connecting the Belt & Road Corridors from Cape Town to Beijing," in *EIR*, November 22, 2019, pp. 36-38.) It includes, besides the Messina Bridge, a Sicily-Tunisia fixed link.



Galleria di Base del Brennero

The 55 kilometer Brenner Base Tunnel, now under construction through the base of the Eastern Alps, is part of the Trans-European Transport Network. Shown, the working face of one of the boring machines. For scale, note the worker in red clothing on each side.

Whereas the sea between Sicily and Tunisia is relatively shallow and a conventional tunnel could be excavated, the Otranto Strait between Italy and Albania is shorter but deeper. (See the author's [article](#), "Ulysses Corridor' Launched in Albania," in *EIR*, January 3, 2020, pp. 36-39.) A conventional tunnel or a bridge cannot be built, but the SFT technology is an ideal one. (See box, next page.)

On March 27, the Transport Committee of the Chamber of Deputies issued an opinion on the entire Resilience and Recovery Plan drafted by the government, with a recommendation for the Messina Link. As a concession to the M5S representatives, the paper calls on the government "to evaluate, concerning the scenarios (bridge vs. tunnel), whether and which infrastructures and interventions can be realized under the conditions set by the National Resilience and Recovery Plan."

The good side of this is that the government is called to motivate and possibly review its proposition that the Messina Bridge would not fulfill the 2026 deadline for completion set by the EU Commission. The bad side is that the document leaves the door open to a further sab-

otage of the Bridge through the hypothetical tunnel option.

But Sicily, Southern Italy and the nation cannot wait any longer. The Bridge and the other infrastructures (railways, ports, and roads modernization) are es-

sential to a recovery of the decades-depressed Mezzogiorno, and can become a locomotive for a national recovery. Sicily has about the same population size of EU member nations such as Denmark, Finland and Ireland—but to reach the mainland, its inhabitants and its

The Potential of an ‘Archimedes Bridge’

The Submerged Floating Tunnel (SFT) is also called the “Archimedes Bridge” because it exploits the famous Principle of Archimedes, according to which the upward, buoyant force that is exerted on a body immersed in a fluid, whether fully or partially submerged, is equal to the weight of the fluid that the body displaces. It can make possible sea crossings too long for suspension bridges or too deep for tunnels.

Thus, an Archimedes bridge can be accomplished in the form of an underwater tube (tunnel) whose stability is provided by anchor points that can go several kilometers down to the seabed, while the tube floats at about 20-30 meters depth—enough not to be an obstacle for navigation, but still close to the surface. The tube is so designed that, were it not for the anchors, it would float on the surface like a ship. Thus, unlike bridges above the surface, it must cope with forces pulling it up and not down. The strength of such forces is a function of the weight of the bridge itself, so that it can be designed in such a way as to bear a minimal strain. Another solution is to float the bridge on pontoons.

A Submerged Floating Tunnel (also called a Submerged Floating Tube Bridge) has existed as an idea for almost two centuries, but only recently have technological advances, especially in deep-sea oil drilling platforms, made it a concrete possibility. The first SFT might be built in Norway, crossing one of the fjords between Trondheim and Kristiansand on the E39 highway.

The SFT has been proposed for several fjords, including the Bøna fjord. Other SFT solutions are being studied in South Korea and the Red Sea. But whereas the Norwegian proposal is open and scientific knowl-

edge is being shared, the other projects are classified. The Bøna fjord feasibility study can be read [here](#).

Heading the Norwegian project is Arianna Minoretti, an Italian engineer who is Chief Engineer in the Technology and Development Department of the Norwegian Public Roads Administration (Statens Vegvesen). Mrs. Minoretti told *EIR* she hopes that the SFT solution will be chosen for crossing the Sula fjord, if the current world economic crisis doesn’t force the Norwegian government to adopt austerity measures. The next step, after the feasibility study, is the definitive project and the testing phase.

An SFT could be a solution for the crossing of the Strait of Otranto, the sea separating the southeast Italian region of Apulia from Albania. The main factor is cost. At its narrowest point, the strait is 45 nautical miles wide, and it reaches a depth of 895 meters. Crossing the strait with conventional bridges or tunnels is not feasible, whereas an SFT would be the ideal solution.

Technically, the SFT has no problems with depth. Nor is length a problem. As far as sea traffic is concerned, the SFT is below the depth needed for surface ships, and its anchorages would also leave enough space for submarine traffic. One of the Bøna fjord proposals, for instance, is vertically anchored to the seabed by steel tube tethers every 200 meters. With the tunnel itself submerged 30 meters down, the tethering concept allows surface ships unimpeded passage and allows submarines to navigate over the tubes while remaining submerged.

The construction of an SFT connecting Italy and Albania would complete one major section of the “Mediterranean Bridge,” or “Ulysses Corridor” envisioned by Prof. Enzo Siviero, an infrastructure corridor connecting Northern Africa to the Southern Balkan region through Southern Italy, pointing east to Central Asia and China, and south to Cape Town, South Africa.

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goods must take a ferry. Once on the mainland, they must travel on an obsolete railway or on a motorway that was built 60 years ago and is more a mountain road than a modern highway. Furthermore, connections within Sicily and with the other Southern Italian regions are also obsolete.

Locally, the Bridge will connect two cities, Messina and Reggio Calabria, merging them into a metropolis of a half-million. Once the Mediterranean-Scandinavian Corridor is completed, mega-container ships coming from Suez can unload or transfer in Sicilian ports, whence goods destined for Central and Northern Europe can quickly travel by train and be delivered a week earlier than by the current route through Gibraltar to Rotterdam.

The Messina Bridge is also the missing link in a strategy to make Sicily a platform for the development of Africa.

Sicily is a 40-minute flight from Africa, but it is in Europe. Companies setting up a base in Sicily can enjoy everything Europe can offer them. The Chinese had seen this already in 2011, and negotiations started with the Italian government: A Chinese company started to

upgrade the Augusta port in Sicily, and the Chinese also offered to co-finance the Messina Bridge. Another project was to build an international airport in the middle of Sicily, to be used as platform towards Europe and towards Africa as well.

All this was sabotaged by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who warned the Italian government against involvement with China, and ultimately a different warning came from the European Union through the European Central Bank (ECB). In a 2011 letter jointly signed by outgoing chairman Jean-Claude Trichet and incoming chairman Mario Draghi, the ECB threatened the Berlusconi-Tremonti government to impose brutal austerity, or the ECB would stop backing Italian sovereign debt. Eventually, the government was overthrown, and economic hitman Mario Monti was installed. His second act was to stop construction of the Messina Bridge (his first act was to repay in advance a derivative contract with Morgan Stanley).

It is a historic irony that Mario Draghi might be forced by circumstances to remedy the disaster he himself helped to provoke.

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