
I. The Battle for Europe

Italy's Cooperation with the New Silk Road Shows Europe the Way to the Future

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

March 23—The March 22-23 state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Italy, where a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two countries to cooperate in the development of the New Silk Road, was a powerful demonstration that inspiring and positive developments can still occur in politics. The new quality of cooperation and the revitalization of the ancient Silk Road will not only bring enormous economic benefits for Italy, such as port development, infrastructure modernization, new investment in a wide range of industrial plants, increased exports to China and joint investment in third countries—but because of its advantageous geographical location in the south of Europe and on the Mediterranean Sea, it will also make Italy the gateway between Asia and Europe, but above all a bridgehead for cooperation in the industrialization of Africa.

One would assume that this would be the number one topic in all news programs. Far from it, because the relationship with China is currently the crucial question in European politics. In Italy, from the thoroughly EU-friendly President Mattarella to the coalition parties and even across much of the opposition, everyone recognizes the enormous potential of China's "culture of growth," as Mattarella called it in his press conference with President Xi Jinping, for an Italy that has been



President of China, Xi Jinping and President of Italy, Sergio Mattarella at the Palazzo del Quirinale in Rome, March 22, 2019.

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badly shaken by EU austerity measures. Meanwhile, the alarm bells were ringing in the "other major EU member states and in the United States," as *T-Online* put it.

The Silk Road is a Chinese Trojan horse, it brings no economic benefits, and Italy's cooperation with it could harm the country's global reputation, according to Garrett Marquis, a spokesman for the U.S. National Security Council who is close to John Bolton. He tweeted that there is "No need for [the] Italian government to lend legitimacy to China's infrastructure vanity project"—the list of toxic arguments on the

part of the geopolitical camp goes on and on.

Anyone who repeated this anti-Chinese line outed himself as a conscious or manipulated proponent of the Anglo-American neocon establishment. U.S. Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, just like Pence, Pompeo, Bolton and all the recent U.S. Department of State Strategy Papers, had recently identified China and Russia as major security threats to the U.S., demonstrating the attempt of the neocon military and intelligence establishment to contain President Trump's China policy, which is based on positive cooperation.

The Failed British Neoliberal System

Behind this anti-Chinese propaganda, which has recently flared up in the U.S. as well as in Europe, lies the conflict between the old paradigm of the neoliberal system, whose forces are intent on clinging to the geopolitical scheme no matter what, and the new paradigm of China's foreign policy concept of win-win cooperation among sovereign nations. While increasing tensions in the U.S.-Russian relationship are certainly a cause for concern, many insiders believe that the primary strategic conflict is the relationship between the U.S. and China. This is all about the famous "Thucydides trap": how will the hitherto dominant power—the U.S.—react to the rise of a second power? Twelve times in history, it came to war; while four times the rising power displaced the first power without war.

For over five years now, the Chinese government has put the Silk Road Initiative on the international agenda, as a completely new concept of strategic relations that overcomes geopolitics and replaces it with President Xi Jinping's idea of a "community of common destiny."



Garrett Marquis, spokesman for the U.S. National Security Council

This new model, which is undoubtedly in China's interests, also brings previously unattainable advantages to the so-far 123 cooperating countries, and has simply proven to be more attractive than the status quo. Instead of assigning states as geopolitical proxies, it has made real progress in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and even in the 13 European countries that have signed memoranda of understanding similar Italy's, for infrastructure, investment in industry and agriculture, cooperation in science and technology, and cultural exchanges.

The EU, for its part, is extremely divided: on the one hand,

as a junior partner to the Anglo-American Empire, it describes China in its recently released "ten-point action plan" as a "systemic rival" promoting "alternative governance models"—while on the other hand, it feels it cannot afford to pass up the economic benefits of cooperation with China. French President Emmanuel Macron, unsuccessful even with his EU reform plans and unpopular among his own people, praised that EU paper in the run-up to his meeting with Xi Jinping, saying that this wake-up call was necessary, that the time for European naïveté was over, and that China had exploited European disunity.

Far more productive, on the other hand, are the views of Italian Finance Minister Giovanni Tria, who refers to the "astonishing diversity" of areas in which Italy could contribute its expertise to the Silk Road Initiative: mechanical engineering, logistics, consulting, feasibility studies, design, engineering, safety, finance, and insurance. Tria continued:

Italy also enjoys a strategic geographic position in the current and future framework of trade relations between East and West and Africa. Located on the



CC/German Finance Ministry

Italian Minister of Finance, Giovanni Tria.

Mediterranean Sea, Italy has the second largest industrial capacity in Europe, and is a leader in technological innovation and well equipped with high quality ports, roads and rail networks. These characteristics make Italy the ideal southern portal for the European continent and trade routes between Europe and China

The confidence and recognition of the potential that is expressed in these words of Tria stand in stark contrast to perceptions of China as a threat. Interestingly enough, the opposition to China comes especially from the circles that had vehemently promoted China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, apparently assuming that this would automatically lead to it adopting the Western model of liberal democracy.

Instead of dismissing China as a “systemic rival,” and sticking to the rather arrogant opinion that the Western democratic model must be the only standard of good government for the whole world—it makes more sense to rethink the criteria for judging the quality of a system. The fact is that China has raised the living standards of its own people enormously in the last 40 years; has for some years offered developing countries for the first time the chance to overcome underdevelopment; has mastered the Asian crisis and then the 2008 crisis much better than the West did; and has produced in its own population an optimism about the future that has been completely lost in the West.

Optimism

In doing so, China has shown that, unlike Christianity and Islam, it does not intend to convert other cultures to its own philosophy, but expressly endorses the principle of sovereignty and the acceptance of other social models. The accusation that China is dividing Europe is more than transparent, in view of the unspeakable Brexit theater, the announced use of military force against the “yellow vests” in France, and the already deep division in Europe between East and West and between North and South.

On the contrary, if Germany and France were to join the Italian model of cooperation with China not only in bilateral relations, but above all in the industrialization of Africa and Southwest Asia, this might be the only platform from which Europe could overcome its inner divisions and find a common mission that is



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Giulio Tremonti, former Minister of Economy and Finance of Italy.

so completely lacking right now.

Instead of hoping to build up its own geopolitical bastion against China, Russia and the U.S., as suggested by Macron's already failed European plans, a united Europe of closely co-operating countries, which would help shape, together with China itself, the “community for the future of humanity,” would also be the best way to strengthen those forces in the United States who want to escape the Thucydides Trap.

Former Italian economics minister Giulio Tremonti pointed out in recent days that the vision of the New Silk Road, that is of a global development program to overcome poverty and underdevelopment, had already been proposed in the early 1990s by the American “visionary” Lyndon LaRouche. In fact, LaRouche had already done so in the mid-1970s.

Today, it should be clear to every thinking person that there are only two choices: either the West tries to suppress the rise of Asia and the developing sector, which would result in World War III with the use of thermonuclear weapons, or it succeeds in launching a new era of humanity, to create a new paradigm of living together. It is high time for the world to hear the “wise words of Lyndon LaRouche,” as former Mexican President José López Portillo once demanded.

If the EU can not reach a new perspective on the New Silk Road approach by the forthcoming EU-China summit on April 9, the cards are expected to be entirely re-shuffled by the European Parliament elections on May 23-26.

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