

‘Silk Road Lady’ on the Potential For a 21st-Century Peace Order

Helga Zepp-LaRouche was interviewed on the Chinese CCTV program [Dialogue](#) in Beijing on Feb. 20, 2014; the half-hour interview first aired on April 14. Dialogue is a prime-time daily English-language talk show, which reaches viewers across China, and more than 80 million subscribers around the world. Yang Rui, who conducted the interview, is one of the most prominent journalists in China, having interviewed numerous foreign ministers and heads of state on his program. For foreign viewers, Dialogue is the preeminent means for following the debate in China; for Chinese viewers, it is the primary venue to hear the opinions of world leaders on questions relating to China. Here is an edited transcript.

Yang Rui: Plans for a New Silk Road for the 21st Century are being promoted by Chinese President Xi Jinping: He imagines an economic belt along the route of the Silk Road traveled more than 2,000 years ago. The proposal has attracted widespread support, as a means of boosting trade and cooperation across the two continents.

One of the keenest supporters is an international thinktank, the Schiller Institute, led by its President, Mrs. Helga Zepp-LaRouche, who first advocated the idea of a Eurasian Land-Bridge more than 20 years ago. She joins us now in the video studio to discuss the importance of a modern Silk Road.

What differences will it make to Central Asia and the world? Will Eurasia emerge as a new economic power, and what impact would it have on China, and the Asia-Pacific region?

[A video is then shown, on the Han Dy-

nasty Silk Road, as a model for international cooperation.]

Yang: Welcome to Dialogue, Madam.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: Hello.

Yang: Helga, you have been promoting the idea of constructing a so-called Eurasian Land-Bridge, which is very similar to the brainchild of Mr. Xi Jinping—the Silk Road that goes through the Central Asia region. Now, you’re sometimes referred to as the New Silk Road Lady. Is that a title you’re proud of?

Zepp-LaRouche: Yes. I don’t remember who exactly came up with this idea, but I think it was because I organized hundreds of conferences and seminars in the last 24 years for this concept.

Yang: So, you enjoy the copyright.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, yes, so to speak.



“I think we have to move away from geopolitics,” Zepp-LaRouche said. “Because geopolitics gave the world two world wars in the 20th Century. And if we stay with geopolitics, I think we are on the verge of a Third World War.”

Sun Yat-sen's Brainchild

Yang: In 1917, if my memory is correct, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, President of the Republic of China, was the first to follow the idea of building the Eurasian Land-Bridge, hopefully to connect China with Russia, because he put forward the idea of getting united with the Russians, the Soviets, the Communist Party, workers and farmers. What do you think of his brainchild, and have you gotten any inspiration from his proposals?

Zepp-LaRouche: Yes. Because Dr. Sun Yat-sen was obviously very much concerned about the well-being of the population, and he also saw in the railway connection between all these different countries, a way to preserve peace. And that has been exactly what has been inspiring us to go with the Eurasian Land-Bridge, because it was meant, from the beginning, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as a peace order for the 21st Century.

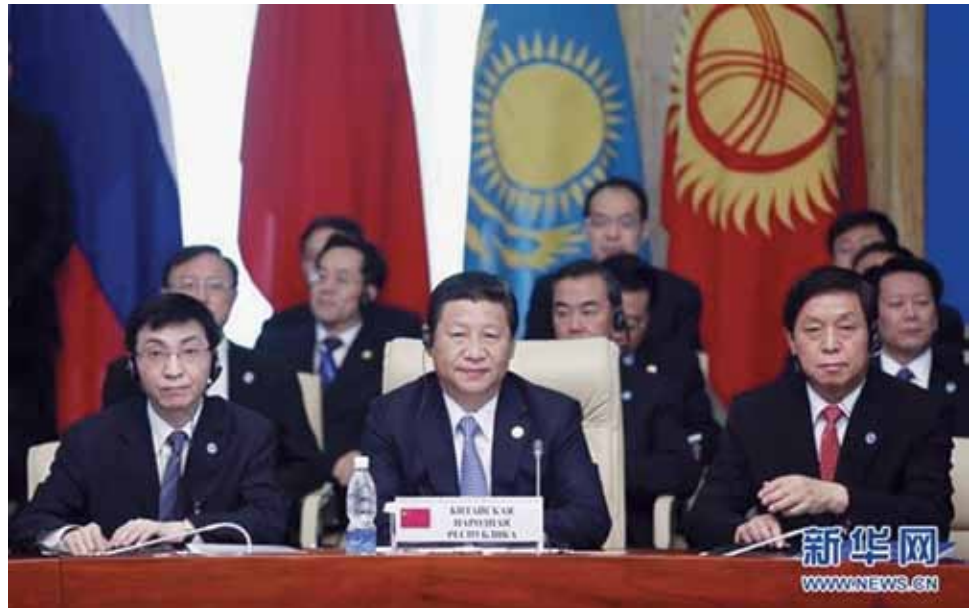
Yang: So, do you think that the well-being of the people should be the vital problem of China in those days? That's the title of a book written by Dr. Sun Yat-sen [*The Vital Problem of China*, 1917—ed.].

Zepp-LaRouche: Yes. He was very much inspired also by Lincoln, and the idea of government by the people, for the people, and of the people, and therefore I think that that is what we have to think about today too.

Yang: What's the relevance between Abraham Lincoln and the New Silk Road?

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, because it is a system of physical-economy. Nowadays, we are very much in monetarist terms. People think about profit, and that has led the world to its present terrible crisis of a threatened collapse of the financial system. And we have to go back to the idea of physical-economy, which is associated with the industrial revolution of America, which was the result of the policies of Lincoln, who also created a land-bridge across America.

So, we have to go back to the ideas of a system of protectionism, of taking as the only source of wealth



Chinese President Xi Jinping (center) proposed an “economic belt,” similar to the concept of the Silk Road, at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting in Kazakhstan. He is shown here at the SCO in September 2013.

the creativity of the people, and not think about buying cheap, selling dear, the idea that's associated with free trade.

So, if the whole world wants to get out of the present crisis, it has to be based on the ideas which already led to industrial revolutions in the past.

Yang: All politics are local. Therefore, trade protectionism, whatever the label you use to describe protectionism—it's domestic politics.

Let's get back to examining the history of the ancient Silk Road. I wonder if you can brief us about how the Silk Road involves much of Asia, and parts of Europe.

Zepp-LaRouche: In the ancient times, or now?

Yang: Ancient times.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, 2,000 years ago, the ancient Silk Road connected cultures and people, and there were all kinds of modes of traveling: horses, camels, ships; and it did create the basis for a tremendous increase of wealth of all the countries which participated in the Silk Road. So, I think if we revive this conception, it will be to the benefit of all participating countries.

Yang: Central Asia is the bridge linking the European countries with the Asia-Pacific economies. However, do you think the economic belt that President Xi

Jinping raised when he was attending a summit meeting for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Kazakhstan would help the region of Central Asia to prosper, and enjoy true prosperity?

Zepp-LaRouche: These countries suffer still from the monoculture [agriculture] of the Soviet Union. Many countries have a lack of water. So when we are talking about the expansion of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, or the New Silk Road, it's not just railways, or means of transport; it is a new economic platform, which transforms the entire economy of the region into a much higher productivity.

It also involves the question of corridors. You know, we have developed the idea that the Silk Road should probably have 100-kilometer width. You put in new energy production and distribution, communications, and this way you make areas which are landlocked, and don't have access to the sea or rivers, investment-friendly, like countries which are on the seaside or on river systems.

It basically means that the landlocked areas of all of Eurasia will enjoy the same benefits as countries on the maritime coasts. And this will lead to a new era of economics. The Land-Bridge, or Silk Road, conception is not just more cooperation among countries. If you think back, evolution of civilization happened first by cultures and countries settled at the coasts; then they would move through the rivers—

Moving Past Geopolitics

Yang: And even through the Opium War, and the slave trade, to begin with, the success story, the early part of the economic success story of the European powers. I hope you can understand that there's a sense of victimhood by many Asians.

Central Asia used to be the backyard of the former Soviet Union. Therefore, do understand the geopolitical concerns of the Russians, when it comes to the future of, say, the New Silk Road, or the economic belt, that threaten to connect China to Central Asia with the developed European part.

Zepp-LaRouche: I think we have to move away from geopolitics. Because geopolitics gave the world two world wars in the 20th Century. And if we stay with geopolitics, I think we are on the verge of a Third World War. And therefore, I think the conception of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, which is a little bit larger than only the Silk Road, because it also involves the building of a corridor along the Trans-Siberian Railway, and

it has many routes going all the way to Indonesia, into Africa. We are really talking about the Silk Road being the beginning of a World Land-Bridge.

And I'm very happy to tell you that my friends in Russia recently communicated to me that while they thought a couple of years ago that this conception would be too big, that now, under the impression of both the dangers in Ukraine, but also the positive experience of Sochi—and I don't mean the Olympic Games, but I mean the fact that Russia has developed the Sochi region as a model for the transformation of other parts of Russia—they are very, very positive about the future perspective of cooperating with the Silk Road, and the Chinese government.

And also, President Putin has expressed very clearly that he seeks such cooperation, so therefore I think there's a very good prospect that this can succeed.

Yang: However, a few days ago, when I was interviewing the Russian Ambassador, Mr. Andrey Avetisyan, he said that what is called the New Silk Road, or economic belt, remains largely a concept. It's not in operation now. At the same, our friends in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, namely, the Central Asian nations, enjoy very much the Chinese investment. So, do you see the subtle difference in the attitudes of both the Central Asian government, and Russia?

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, I think what counts is the attitude of President Putin, and some of the other people who I'm in contact with, because I don't think that everybody has already moved away from such concerns as the ambassador expressed. Right now we are at an incredibly dangerous moment of history, and either we get our act together as a civilization which can consciously go into a new era of mankind, or we may not exist. If we don't change the way things are going now, we may end up in a Third World War.

So, I think it is extremely important to put a peace order for the 21st Century on the table, and create a level of reason, where everybody who participates has a benefit. So that historical conflicts, past wars, and ethnic conflicts and all these problems are put behind us, because if you build the Eurasian Land-Bridge as a totality, from all of Europe to Asia—

The Central Asian Region

Yang: We must adopt a holistic view about the prospects of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, so you sound very rational, reasonable, and correct.

Perhaps so far we are discussing the prospects of a

Silk Road only from the Russian and Chinese perspective. In this process we may have ignored the important role that the Persian state of Iran plays, because it's a very important littoral state of the Caspian Sea. It enjoys the oil deposits. So, what do you think of the current process of rapprochement between the Western countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran, when it come to energy collaboration between China and the volatile Middle Eastern region?

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, we have created actually a development program as part of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, which encompasses the entire region from Afghanistan, Pakistan, all the way to the Caucasus, to Syria, to the Gulf. To take this region as one area, which right now is torn apart by terrible poverty, by terrorism, by the effects of the drug trade. And if you want to have peace, right now this region is one of the many potential powderkegs which could lead to a Third World War eruption. It's like the Balkan wars before World War I.

The only way to stabilize this region, especially with the perspective of American and NATO troops leaving Afghanistan, or at least a large part of them, you need to put in a real development perspective. And we have developed a program which involves greening the deserts—because most of the region is desert. You can use the water of aquifers. You can redirect certain rivers, which right now flow into the Arctic in Siberia. You can redirect them to the Aral Sea. You can use that water basically to develop all of Central Asia in terms of water. Link pipelines into Iran, and then have as a second phase, the peaceful use of nuclear energy for large demands of desalination of ocean water, and start to green the desert.

We want to put in infrastructure essentially as it is, for example, in western Europe. Germany, for example, enjoys infrastructure which is rivers, railways, highways, which are all interconnected, and infrastructure is always the precondition for economic development.

Yang: Very much so. It is in this area that Chinese



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The World Land-Bridge will make possible the economic development of every nation, Zepp-LaRouche explained. Infrastructure, such as that in Germany (shown here: Hamburg Harbor), "is always the precondition for economic development."

investment is highly expected by all the markets in that particular—

Let's look at Afghanistan. It currently remains an observer partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Following the military drawdown of the U.S. and NATO troops by the end of this year, postwar reconstruction in this landlocked, impoverished country will become a major concern for the rest of the world, as part of the exit strategy, and China will be an integral part of the postwar reconstruction. To my poor knowledge about this country, it used to depend, and perhaps it currently also depends, on drug cultivation and drug trafficking for much of its livelihood. There is also a lot of tribal rivalry between different warlords and landlords and tribal rivalries of different kinds.

What do you think of the difficulties lying ahead for major members of the SCO to get involved in the postwar reconstruction, so that countries along the Silk Road will enjoy true prosperity?

Zepp-LaRouche: The drug production has increased 40 times since NATO started the war in Afghanistan 12 years ago. This has become the major security problem for Russia, which is losing right now 100,000 people per year, and the Russian drug czar, Viktor Ivanov, has called on the West, and other countries, to cooperate to deal with that.

Now, we know that the drug traffic from Afghani-

stan and the laundering of drug money is the main source for the financing of terrorism, of al-Qaeda, al-Nusra, and similar groupings. But many of the people who have been recruited to this—not because they are radical jihadists, but because they are poor. And if they are offered \$500 a month, then they join this, and therefore the key question would be, first to eradicate the drug production—which is very easy: With modern technology you can eradicate it. You can spot the routes of the money laundering. NSA has proven that from satellites, you can spot every plant, if you want, so the question of both stopping the production, and the laundering, is technically no problem.

And then, naturally, you have to put in an alternative, a vast development program for the population, so that they have an incentive to go in a different direction. And I have said for a very long time, if the neighbor countries—Russia, China, Iran, India, Pakistan—would all cooperate in such a regional development conception, then you can get Afghanistan going in a peaceful direction.

But only if you do it as a totality. It does not function if you only take it as one country. There has to be a genuine development of the entire Eurasian Land-Bridge, and then you can contain, and overcome this problem.

Yang: What do you think of the idea of a maritime Silk Road?

Zepp-LaRouche: It's a very good idea, because in Southeast Asia, there is the largest concentration of population in the world, and the present Strait of Malacca, for example, is completely overloaded, and therefore you need to develop new maritime trade routes. For example, we have proposed as part of this Eurasian Land-Bridge, the building of the Kra Canal, which would be parallel to the Strait of Malacca, and open this region for more trade.

If we go in the direction of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, the production of real wealth will increase dramatically, and therefore, you need new trade routes to integrate all of these countries together. And we wrote, for example, many years ago, a plan for a 50-year development of the Pacific region,¹ which already had all of these projects.

But many of these projects are ready to start tomorrow.

1. See Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "A 50-year development policy for the Indian-Pacific Oceans Basin," *EIR Special Report*, Sept. 13, 1983.

The Thucydides Trap

Yang: Congratulations. Congratulations on your blueprint, and your vision for the prosperity of the Asian-Pacific region.

So far, I believe you are trying to look at these issue from the European perspective, which might be acceptable by the parties involved. However, what do you think of the Chinese brainchild of taking over [construction of] the Gwadar deep-water port in Pakistan, and helping construct a port in Myanmar, so that a pipeline could be built to connect the shipments from the seas to Xinjiang, in the case of Pakistan, and through Myanmar to China one way or another?

This is the blueprint of Mr. Xi Jinping and his predecessors.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, I know that some people may be concerned about China—

Yang: Do you know subcontext for the Chinese brainchildren? Because of the legacy of the Cold War, most Chinese don't quite trust the security umbrella the U.S. provides, because they are afraid of China sharing the center stage in the 21st Century. It's largely a challenge coming from newcomers to the existing international political and economic order. The U.S. is not ready yet; therefore China has to consider its own alternative.

Zepp-LaRouche: But there are also people who say you should not be afraid of the economic prosperity of China. For example, the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, has made many speeches where he warned the West of falling into the "Thucydides trap." Thucydides was this Greek historian who wrote about the Peloponnesian War, and he said that this war occurred because the Athenians were afraid of the economic growth of Sparta. And he said the growth of China should not lead to such a Thucydides trap.

And in a certain sense, I don't think that is the main problem. The main problem of the world right now is that the entire trans-Atlantic region is collapsing. The U.S. economy is collapsing. The European Union is suffering a terrible crisis in southern Europe. The financial system of the trans-Atlantic region is about to blow out.

Yang: What do you think of the importance of having U.S. support for both a land Silk Road and a maritime Silk Road? Because I hate to always go to geopolitical issues, but don't you think that economic issues and geopolitical issues are quite interwoven?



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Gwadar deep-water port in Pakistan (seen here) is the “brainchild” of China, said Yang Rui, an example of President Xi’s blueprint for China’s role in the economic development of its neighbors.

Zepp-LaRouche: I think we need to have a change in American policy for it to support the Silk Road. Because right now the United States is not in conformity with its own Constitution, in terms of its policy. There is a lot of criticism of President Obama, even from the Congress, because this is the case, so we need a change in American policy. But there are fortunately many patriots in the country who are thinking exactly about such a change.

We are in a crisis. We are in an existential crisis of civilization right now, and what we are proposing, and President Xi Jinping is proposing, is a vision of the future. And a lot of the geopolitical thinking is of the past. And if you cannot move to the next phase, the next era of civilization, we may not exist.

Right now we are on the verge of World War III. The developments in the Ukraine are extremely dangerous, and could really lead to a terrible confrontation.

Yang: Do you take the political upheaval in Ukraine as a part of their appealing for democratic transformation, or do you think this is largely a geopolitical legacy between the Russians and the European Union, in how to reallocate the political resources in that poor country?

Zepp-LaRouche: No, I think this is the result of a [Western] policy of regime-change, which started when the Soviet Union collapsed. The first phase of this was the Orange Revolution, where the West had put in 2,200 NGOs, which selected a network of people based on their anti-Russian profile. This was in 2004.

But now it’s much worse, because what we have now is that the hardcore violence is conducted by Nazis. Svoboda is a Nazi party. They have a swastika as their party logo. And it’s completely scandalous that the EU and the United States are supporting such violent networks.

Yang: Well, Ukraine could be part of the broad spectrum of the Silk Road, that goes through Central Asia connecting with much of Europe. Whether the emerging markets or labor markets of the Silk Road will benefit from President Xi Jinping’s idea, largely depends on whether the Chinese economy could be sustained, whether we will enjoy sustainable prosperity. So, by the end of this conversation, which I think is very enlightening, what do you think of the future of the Chinese economy, and of the new leadership of President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keziang?

Zepp-LaRouche: I think they’re doing an excellent job. From my standpoint, also Prime Minister Li went to Romania, met with 15 heads of state, and promised that China would build a five-track train system in Eastern and Central Europe. This is all very, very good.

The problem is that the financial system of the trans-Atlantic zone is collapsing. And we need in a change in the monetary system—that’s why we propose for the United States and Europe the return to the banking separation which was implemented by President Roosevelt in 1933.

Yang: Thank you for your participation. I truly appreciate it.