

# China's New Silk Road and Europe

GBTIMES is a multimedia news site based in Finland, where it was founded by Chinese entrepreneur Zhao Yinong, which refers to itself as a “bridge between China and the rest of the world.” It published the introduction below and the following interview with Helga Zepp-LaRouche on Feb. 16.

China's ambitious plan to link itself with Europe and Africa through new Silk Road trade routes has so far received a mixed welcome in Europe.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the brainchild of Chinese President Xi Jinping, proposes to boost trade and economic integration across Eurasia through over \$1 trillion worth of investments in railways, ports, power plants and other infrastructure links. The BRI has been officially endorsed by Central and Eastern European countries, many of which are hoping that Chinese investment could create jobs and improve infrastructure.

But Western European countries have been more cautious, with British Prime Minister Theresa May declining to sign up to the BRI during her recent trip to Beijing and French President Emmanuel Macron warning during his trip to China that the New Silk Road cannot be “one-way.” There are also concerns in Brussels about a lack of reciprocity in trade with China and increasing Chinese investment in critical infrastructure in Europe.

The German-based Schiller Institute, however, has for the past several years been campaigning for the Belt and Road Initiative in Europe by organizing hundreds of conferences on the topic. Helga Zepp-LaRouche, the institute's founder and president, talked to gbtimes.com



Chinese high-speed rail is a central part of the the New Silk Road project.

about the initiative and why she believes Europe should embrace it.

**Q:** What is the Schiller Institute?

**Helga Zepp-LaRouche:** The Schiller Institute was founded in 1984 as a think tank, with the main idea behind it being that peace and order in the world would only function if each nation would relate to the best cultural tradition of the others and vice versa.

One of its focuses was to fight for a just new world economic order, something like in the tradition of the Nonaligned Movement, especially inspired by the ideas of my husband, Mr. Lyndon LaRouche, and secondly to fight for a renaissance of classical culture. I gave it the name of [German philosopher] Friedrich Schiller be-

cause his image of man was the most noble and beautiful one and I thought such a conception was urgently needed in the political realm.

**Q:** How did you first get to know China?

**Zepp-LaRouche:** I went to China for the first time in 1971 on a cargo ship, which was repaired in Shanghai. So, I had plenty of occasions to visit many factories, children's palaces, and the countryside. I also went to Shenzhen, Qingdao and Beijing, and that left a very lasting impression on me because this was in the middle of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and China was very much different then. But it started a deep interest on my side in Chinese philosophy and culture.

I was also inspired by the changes which took place in China after the reforms of Deng Xiaoping. I visited China many times in the 1990s and the 2000s, and especially after Xi Jinping announced the New Silk Road. And I could see the dramatic changes and the economic miracle which China has undergone. I feel very privileged that I have sort of personally witnessed the unbelievable transformation of China over almost 50 years.

**Q:** You mentioned President Xi Jinping who proposed the Belt and Road initiative in 2013. The Schiller Institute has been very supportive of the BRI. Why is this?

**Zepp-LaRouche:** First, the Belt and Road Initiative is presently the most important strategic initiative on the planet because it proposes what Xi Jinping calls a community for shared future of humanity. The idea of one humanity is a perfect conception for overcoming geopolitics, which was the reason for two world wars and which, in the age of nuclear weapons, can lead to a terrible catastrophe just as big. If you look at the incredible progress this initiative has made in the five years since it was announced, you already see a tremendous transfor-



*The opening of the Beijing International Symposium on Economic Development of the Regions Along the New Euro-Asia Continental Bridge, 1996.*

EIRNS

mation where the developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, for the first time, have legitimate hope to overcome poverty and under-development.

It just so happens that the Belt and Road initiative is very much in accordance with proposals my husband and myself have made during the last decades. After the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991 we proposed something that we called the Eurasian Land-Bridge, which was the idea to connect the Eurasian peoples and industries through development corridors. The Chinese government picked up on the proposal to organize an international conference in Beijing in 1996, in which I participated as speaker. Already at that point China considered the development of the Eurasian Land-Bridge a strategic initiative, but this was put on hold due to the Asian financial crisis of 1997. We were then extremely happy when Xi Jinping announced this policy in 2013. With China's economic power all these plans can now be realized.

**Q:** Why do you think the Chinese are interested in this idea of bridging the Eurasian continent?

**Zepp-LaRouche:** China has developed its own economic model of lifting its population out of poverty and it also wants to contribute to eliminating poverty on

the world scale. I think that is a very different approach to many other countries. There are now only 30 million poor people left in China. In comparison, there are 90 million poor people in the European Union and more than 50 million people who are officially poor in the United States, but no clear plans to eliminate poverty in totality.

**Q:** So, you are saying China is currently the only major country that has a global vision?

**Zepp-LaRouche:** Yes. I participated in the Belt and Road forum in Beijing last year and everyone who participated in this conference had a distinct impression that we were witnessing the beginning of a new era of mankind.

At the Oct. 18-24, 2017 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi promoted the goal of having a fully developed, modern, culturally advanced, happy country by 2050—not only happiness for the Chinese people, but for all the people in the world. Normally, politicians in the West think at best until the next election, and I have not heard from any Western leader a plan on how to uplift the entire human species in the next 30, 40, 50 years.

The idea to create happiness for the people as a policy goal was last heard during the American Revolution when it was established in the American Declaration of Independence that it is a fundamental right to have life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This is a notion coming from Leibniz, which means the ability of people to develop their full potential. I have seen in China on many occasions that people there really think that way. They have the idea that there is no limit to their ability to self-perfect to improve society and relations between nations. It's a completely different spirit to what you find anywhere in the West.

**Q:** All Central and Eastern European countries have officially joined the Belt and Road Initiative, but many Western countries including the UK, France and Germany have been more cautious about it. Why do you think this is the case?

**Zepp-LaRouche:** When certain politicians in these



*China President Xi Jinping visiting Yangling Village on July 18, 2016.*

Xinhua/Li Tao

countries say they want to insist on standards and rules, and that they don't want the spreading of Chinese investment in Europe, I think it's a question of geopolitical control. The EU for example could have developed Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, but they didn't. When China then comes and starts to build the kind of infrastructure that the EU did not build, these countries are happy and want to go with the New Silk Road. And that causes some people who believe in geopolitics to see it as a threat.

The present Western system is based not on the common good as a primary orientation, but on monetarist profit-making. This system benefits those who speculate and those who run the banking system. But it leads to such things like the 2008 financial crisis, which was a systemic crisis, and nothing has been done since other than quantitative easing and pumping money.

**Q:** But do you think China itself has overcome geopolitics?

**Zepp-LaRouche:** I know that that is not the view of many politicians in the West, but I think assumptions about China are just people's projections of what they themselves think. I am not a naive person—I have studied this in depth and looked at it closely—and I do think that China does not plan to dominate the world with its system. The Chinese model is more attractive, and many countries want to repeat what it has been doing, but I don't think China wants to impose its values.

My explanation for this is China's Confucian tradition. For example, Christians are supposed to win other

people over to Christianity, but Confucianism does not do that. Confucianism is perfectly happy to live in co-existence. And if you look at the entire history of China, you never had religious war. You had Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity all living in a perfect ecumenical harmony. So, I think in Chinese history, you don't find anything which would give credibility to the claim that China is not doing what they say. I think they are doing exactly what they say they are doing and they mean it.

**Q:** What would it mean for Western European countries to join the Belt and Road Initiative?

**Zepp-LaRouche:** It would mean that there would be a shift towards the real economy. Right now, you have this money-makes-money philosophy, but if you look at even an advanced country like Germany, there's a tremendous backlog in infrastructure. There are warnings by some of the logistic organizations that Germany is about to lose its standard as a location for industrial development because of the collapse of the infrastructure. So, if European countries would join the New Silk Road it would mean that they could basically renew their infrastructure like China has done, and build high-speed trains connecting all major cities.

With the policy of the Troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund), the industries and the economies of the Southern European countries were destroyed. Now you see that with the advantages that come from Chinese investment in the Piraeus port and other projects in Greece, it's going upwards. And with the EU, it went downwards. The same is true for Italy, Spain and Portugal.

Europe could also participate with China in the reconstruction of Southwest Asia, of Syria, of Iraq, because you must bring economic development to these countries if terrorism is supposed to be eliminated. You have to give young people a future which they don't have right now. It would mean you could solve the refugee problem in a human way.

**Q:** But do you think that some Europeans might be cautious about the growing Chinese influence because they think they might have to someday accept the same kind of restrictions on freedoms that China has at home?

**Zepp-LaRouche:** Yes, but if people are worried that they may lose some of their hedonistic impulses—

well, that might not be altogether such a bad thing. Because what we are seeing right now is a decadent society with all the violence, pornography and drug addiction. You have an opium epidemic in the United States, which is contributing to the fact that life expectancy is going down for the first time. If there is any parameter for the functioning of an economy, it is the life expectancy. If an economy is doing well, it's increasing and obviously it's an indicator that there is something fundamentally wrong if it's going down because of suicide, alcoholism and drug addiction.

On the other hand, there was just a poll made in Germany among 42 firms which were taken over by Chinese investors. In all cases, the management and the employees said that it was a positive thing that the Chinese took over, instead of speculators or hedge funds. I think some of these changes that come with more Chinese investment and influence would be beneficial. I would even go so far to agree with Leibniz, who said already in the 17th Century that because of the superior morality of the Chinese, one should import Chinese missionaries to teach morality to the Europeans.

**Q:** So, you are optimistic that the acceptance of the Belt and Road Initiative is growing in Europe eventually?

**Zepp-LaRouche:** We have found that all people who do business in China or who have travelled to China or who are married with a Chinese person, are all positive, and they know that what China is doing is a historic transformation of humanity.

The Belt and Road Initiative is not just about economics; it's not just about infrastructure from A to B, but it is really a new paradigm. And what I mean by new paradigm is a new way of understanding the role of humanity. We are the only creative species who can invent new technologies and sciences and change the mode of our existence. It's not the nature of man to be greedy, to chase for stock market gains and try to exploit and dominate others. It's the nature of man to develop our own potential to the fullest so that we can contribute to the development of the human species. And the new paradigm will be that more and more people, as time goes by, will be able to realize their true potential as human beings.

<https://gbtimes.com/interview-with-helga-zepp-la-rouche-on-chinas-new-silk-road-and-europe>