

Pepe Escobar: Beyond the Chokepoints: Eurasia's 2030 Masterplan

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#Nima

When it comes to the war with Iran, Pepe, I think that the calculation or the understanding on the part of the Iranians is that the war is coming, not because the United States is in a good position right now—they're having some sort of trouble—but because Israel and Benjamin Netanyahu are desperate right now. He falters domestically. He has to do something about it. That's why they're feeling that the United States may attack Iran. And the response is obvious for us, because you remember before the war, the second round of war happening, they said it's going to be a regional war. If you start a war, it's going to be regional. Right now, the IRGC announced just yesterday that it's going to go beyond the region. It means that they're going to...

#Pepe

But that's exactly what I told you five minutes ago, Nima. In the assessment by the Iranian leadership, the response is going to be the real deal, not the first strike by the Zionists and the Americans. What you're saying is absolutely correct. That's it.

#Nima

And they're honest in the way they're expressing themselves. We've seen that before. They have no reason to lie about it.

#Pepe

And they spell out their position clearly over and over again every day. And obviously, those clowns don't listen because it's genetically impossible for them to listen and admit that the rules of the game have changed.

#Nima

And I would assume they're going to hit Diego Garcia. They're going to hit somewhere close to Greece.

#Pepe

That's quite possible.

#Nima

All those bases that were used during the war, the second round of the war, they're going to hit them.

#Pepe

Yes, because they are all legitimate targets. Absolutely.

#Nima

Yeah. And putting that aside... Pepe, we had something from Saudi Arabia. They call it a non-aggression pact. How does that fit into the new picture that you gave us about the Eurasian concept? Are they prepared to accept something from Saudi Arabia and GCC countries, to be on the sideline, to be at the margins of a new security architecture? Yeah.

#Pepe

No, if there is a new security architecture guaranteed, especially by Russia and China, this will encompass the GCC. And in this case, the umbrella will be provided by Pakistan. That will be the major, major game changer. It will not be the U.S. anymore. It will be Pakistan. And of course, Pakistan supported in the background by Russia and China. So, no direct involvement of Russia and China in a new security umbrella for the Persian Gulf and for the petro-monarchies. But because of the close relationship between Pakistan and the GCC, it's self-evident.

And of course, Iran would agree with that, based on what they are discussing with the Pakistanis and based on the role of guarantors by both Russia and China. So now we're talking about, and it applies, it's a multipolar negotiation between all these Eurasian players, which is how are we going to secure West Asia again in a completely different framework that we across Eurasia control, and not controlled by the empire of chaos, plunder, piracy, everything that they do so well, right?

#Nima

I don't know what that tone was about. Did they talk about the situation with Taiwan? Because during the meeting between Donald Trump and Xi, I'm sure they were talking about it. But how

about Xi talking to Putin, or maybe considering the case of Taiwan? And how does Russia see the case of Taiwan?

#Pepe

They don't need to talk about that. The Russian position is very, very, very... In fact, the Russian position is so obvious that Putin once again reaffirmed the One China policy, totally supported by the Russian Federation. That's all you need. You need one phrase, one sentence, and that's over. Because they know. And obviously Xi knows how Putin feels about Taiwan, and he knows the official position of the Russian Federation. So you don't need to spell it out over and over again. You do that in 10 seconds, and that's it. Okay, let's talk about something else. With the Americas, a completely different story, Nima, and all of you, and I'm sure all of you are aware that the Taiwan issue is completely prefabricated by the exceptionalists. It's a non-issue.

And China has been saying this for decades: there will be peaceful reunification, period. And we are not in a hurry. We have until at least 2049, according to Deng Xiaoping, for peaceful reunification with Taiwan. So they're not in a hurry. It will happen. It's going to be similar to the process with Hong Kong. It's probably going to be one country, three systems. We have, for the moment, one country, two systems with Hong Kong. With Taiwan, we're going to have one country, three systems. They will be relatively autonomous. It's an industrial powerhouse that will continue to be so. But, of course, the overarching framework will be the Chinese mainland from Beijing. This is a non-issue everywhere across Asia, Nima. Nobody in Asia discusses Taiwan. Everybody knows what's going to happen.

It's a Chinese problem, and it is a Chinese domestic problem, of course. From the point of view of the dwindling empire, of course, they need reasons to harass, contain, encircle China. So Taiwan is one of them. The South China Sea as a whole is another one. The Strait of Malacca, if they decide to block it, is another one. The Chinese are fully aware, you know, trying to block the Chinese inside the first island chain, not to mention the second. And the Chinese, of course, have been working on it at military levels to break this American-imposed encirclement inside the island chains. And there's an assumption that they already can do it, but they don't need to advertise it too much. This is not how China works. China works in silence, and with lots of hard work.

And with planning extremely long term. It's not an accident that they have successive five-year plans, and you have to fulfill all the targets explicitly outlined in each five-year plan. The one that starts this year, 2026—we were discussing this yesterday at the School University here in Shanghai. Just to give an idea, a simple detail for all of you: until 2030, the plan is to have 70% of the Chinese economy directly interconnected and linked to artificial intelligence. And this was one of the key points of our discussion yesterday. And I had fantastic questions from the kids, from the students. And they were worried—are we going to have jobs in this future? And, of course, this is an open discussion in China everywhere.

It's a big discussion on Chinese social media everywhere. Is AI going to end up destroying technology, jobs everywhere? And what are we going to do with these populations that will need to be recycled because they lost their jobs, taken over by AI? This is what China is thinking nowadays—how they're going to modernize even faster than they have been modernizing so far. When you look at the obvious signs of modernized China all across Shanghai, it's something that people in the West have no clue about, how advanced it is. It's immensely impressive. And I've had the chance this time to go to many parts of Shanghai, not staying in the original clusters, you know. And you see the modernization spreading to everyday life everywhere you go.

It's immensely impressive. So this is what they discussed. And foreign policy for them—they know. They know that they have their alliances across Asia. They know that the relationship with Russia is very strong. And in terms of providing the energy that they need, it's a deal. For instance, yesterday, one of the conclusions was, okay, we're going to speed up Power of Siberia 2. It was supposed to be inaugurated by 2030 or so. No, they want it to be inaugurated possibly next year, by the end of 2027. And then the Americans want to blockade the Strait of Malacca. Who cares? They have two mega gas pipelines from Russia—the SPO, the Power of Siberia 1, which is already at maximum capacity—and they're going to have the Power of Siberia 2 as well via Mongolia.

No problem at all. So that's why they can't allow themselves, "Okay, let's concentrate on our internal domestic problems—loss of jobs. There is inflation. It's not stratospheric like in many Western places, but inflation is growing in China." So they're concentrating on tweaking jobs. The model essentially works. So that's the number one preoccupation, and it's the preoccupation of the five-year plan. The only external problem they have is American harassment—containment of China by any means necessary. And of course, these direct and indirect wars against China. They know perfectly well that the war against Iran is also a war against China. Everybody knows that. If you ask kids in college, they know about this.

#Nima

Yeah, it's so amazing because some people are trying to say that the only thing that matters to China is making money. They don't have any strategy. They don't. It's just...

#Pepe

Nima, look, maybe I'm getting too old for this shit. I don't have patience for stupidity. Not with my age and not with what I've lived all across the world for the past four decades. So when I come here, I come here as a student. And yesterday they were telling me, ah, you want to go back to being a student? I said, oh yes, if I could, I'd be here in the classroom with you as a student, learning. And when you come to China, you learn non-stop about everything—everything: civilizational aspects and modernization aspects, and of course, daily rituals, especially the mutual

respect that people have, the way people treat each other, the way they treat their elders, how they follow the rituals of daily life. There is a deep respect for these rituals, for the hierarchy of these rituals, and how to respect the other, especially, and all these rules of politesse and civilization.

It's extraordinary. It's always a learning experience and a humbling experience. You're learning from them all the time. And, of course, they are hardworking. They don't want trouble with anybody. They want to make money with the whole planet. Of course they do. They are a merchant system, of course, and they are doing that. But they want to do business on a win-win basis with everybody, including their opponents, including the empire of total chaos. But, of course, they know that it's going to be very hard, especially now that they are already the number one geoeconomic power in the world. And the people who run the show in the U.S., Nima, they will never accept that. They will try to undermine, harass, do all sorts of horrible things against China. And this is not going to change. But the Chinese are ready.

And that's the main difference. I would say this attitude started to solidify last year, when Trump launched his first tsunami of sanctions against China. I remember well, I was here in Shanghai at the time, and we could see that the reaction was completely different compared to the past. They stood up and they said, ah, you want to mess with us? Okay, just wait. So now it's a completely different story. Now the Americans are learning that they cannot mess with China. And China knows how to—or at least, like Xi demonstrated last week—he managed the emperor of Barbaria, and at the same time, he was smacking him on his teeth with such subtlety that the emperor of Barbaria didn't even notice. This is what civilizations do. They are sophisticated enough to go for broke, but, of course, in a very civilized way.

#Nima

Pepe, did Trump try to convince Xi to buy energy or oil from the United States? And what was the response from Xi?

#Pepe

This is what they say. Once again, bullshit, spin. You don't see this anywhere in any of the official communications by the Ministry of Commerce. And obviously, the Chinese are not going to buy American energy. For what? They're going to buy energy from their enemies? No bloody way. No way. No, this is American spin. And that's the problem, because they spin all sorts of bullshit. This is picked up by everybody around the world, including independent analysts, and they reproduce it without checking with the Chinese. And, of course, the Chinese are not going to tell you all the details, but they can simply issue a "No, this is not true," which they do all the time. There you go.

#Nima

Just to wrap it up, Pepe, can we say that Trump's agenda to dominate the energy market is over because of what has happened in the Middle East, because of this summit between Xi and Russia about the new pipeline you mentioned between Russia and China? And how is the energy market in Eurasia as time goes by?

#Pepe

Well, no, Nima, it's not over. They're going to try to pull new tricks, of course. They are absolutely desperate because the whole Hormuz operation failed. Because one of the key objectives of this war from the beginning, not stated publicly, was to take control of Iranian Persian Gulf ports and the Strait of Hormuz. They were not even talking about the Caspian. It's a different story. It was centered on the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. You control most of the flow of Iranian energy there, outside of Iran all the way to Asia. So that's why this was a war from the beginning against Iran and against Asian customers of Iranian energy. As we can see, the whole thing was a major failure and will continue to be a major failure. So they're going to try something else.

They're going to try to pull some tricks. The Malacca angle is still on. They can try to do something, I wouldn't say short-term, but at least mid-term, based on this. The Indonesians, sometimes they can be quite something. Indonesians do a military agreement with the Americans, so they're going to regret this big, big time. The Americans could use this military agreement to pressure the Indonesians, and we're going to have military vessels in the Strait of Malacca, close to the Indonesian coastlines in Sumatra. Anything is possible. And the Chinese are ready for that, and the other players in Asia are also ready for that. But if there is a strategy in mind, with the Americans, they don't do anything strategically. It's always tactics, one tactic after another.

The overall desire, not strategy, is to block choke points that are used by the Chinese anywhere. The problem is they are running out of choke points to block them, because the options for the Chinese are multiplying by the day. Guess one of the most important discussions at the St. Petersburg Forum, which is going to be, what, in two weeks from now. I hope to be there. Once again, the Northern Silk Road, as the Chinese call it. The Northern Silk Road, the Russian denomination. The Polar or Arctic Silk Road, the Chinese denomination. That's it. Once again, bypassing the Suez Canal. The International South Transportation Corridor, which is, once again, Russia, Iran, India. Maybe India will be out of the picture sooner rather than later.

Who will jump in? China, once again. Especially now that the port of Gwadar is being used like an Iranian port. This is one of the most fascinating developments of these past two months. In the beginning, intuitively, there was this feeling that Chabahar was competing against Gwadar. Chabahar, as you know, Nima, in Sistan-Baluchistan in Iran, and Gwadar in the Arabian Sea in Pakistan. Distance, 80 kilometers. Very, very close. So they were natural competitors. Now, not

anymore, because the Iranians are using the port of Gwadar as well, which is part of the New Silk Roads. It's the terminal in the Arabian Sea of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. And what this spells out once again, very close collaboration between Iran, Pakistan, and China.

#Nima

Exactly.

#Pepe

So exactly, Nima. But do the Americans think about stuff like that? Obviously not. Never. Because they don't think strategically. They don't think that their enemies or rivals or malign creatures, or whatever stupid terminology they use, are capable of thinking strategically and organizing themselves strategically. That's another example.