Pepe Escobar: Iran STRIKES US F-16, Trump STUNNED by Putin & Xi's BOMBSHELL

Iran has severely damaged an F-16 in retaliation to US strikes as the fallout from the trilateral summit between Putin, Xi and Trump takes shape. Geopolitical analyst and independent journalist Pepe Escobar joins to discuss. Pepe Escobar is a leading independent geopolitical analyst and author who specializes in the US war on rising Eurasia. Pepe on Telegram: https://t.me/rocknrollgeopolitics Pepe on X: https://x.com/RealPepeEscobar Pepe's latest article: https://geopoliticsprime.substack.com/p/shenzhen-how-an-imperfect-g3-buried Subscribe for more in-depth geopolitical analysis! Leave your thoughts in the comments below! Support the Channel: Patreon: https://www.patreon.com/dannyhaiphong SUBSCRIBE ON RUMBLE: Rumble: https://rumble.com/c/DannyHaiphong Follow Me on Social Media: Twitter: https://twitter.com/DannyHaiphong Telegram: https://t.me/DannyHaiphong Support the channel in other ways: https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: $Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: https://paypal.me/spiritofho

#Danny

Welcome, everyone. As you can see, I am joined by Pepe Escobar, geopolitical analyst and journalist, joining me from Guangzhou. Thanks for coming on, Pepe. My pleasure. How are you?

#Pepe Escobar

Greetings to you and to all of you from Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province. And, okay, I'll give you the killer right away. By purchasing power parity, the GDP of Guangdong province is already 61% of the GDP of Japan—the whole of Japan. So this means that in a few years, just one Chinese province will be wealthier than the whole of Japan.

#Danny

Okay.

#Pepe Escobar

Case closed.

#Danny

Yeah, mic drop. Pepe, okay, well, let's go over some news stories then. As this summit that you've covered so deeply, the trilateral summit, was going on, we've had escalations with regard to Iran. Even just yesterday, Iran announced that they'd targeted an F-16 over the Strait of Hormuz. CENTCOM has denied it. But Iranian media and the IRGC are both saying that they forced this fighter jet to rapidly descend and make an emergency landing back in the UAE. I know you've covered this.

Iran has also launched an operation as they prepare their oil tankers to cross through the U.S. blockade. They will use military means to ensure that any U.S. strikes against these tankers are met with either attacks on the U.S. Navy or attacks on U.S. energy assets or U.S.-linked energy assets in the Gulf. But Pepe, you recently wrote an article that also included what the meeting between Putin, Xi, and Trump in Shenzhen on November 19th meant for the war on Iran. You titled the article "How an Imperfect G3 Buried the G1." So let's get right into it, Pepe. Your thoughts and reactions to this turbulent world situation amid this meeting that you covered in such detail. Your analysis.

#Pepe Escobar

Wow. How many hours? Can we have the rest of the Chinese night to talk about it? Well, it was quite something on so many levels. For me, it was also quite emotional because I used to live across the border. I lived on and off in Hong Kong for decades, in fact. And I used to come to Shenzhen and Guangzhou quite often, especially in the 2000s and the 2010s. And this is the first time since COVID that I've been back. And obviously, it's—wow. Can you imagine? Well, the president of the United States, in fact, while he was in his limo going back and forth along the absolutely immaculate boulevards of Shenzhen, was so impressed that he started to compare that with Chicago, New York, L.A. And well, everybody who's been to China knows that it's a completely different story here.

Okay, where to start on Shenzhen? This column was a very long column. I cut it from 5,000 words to 1,500 so I could grab people's attention, explaining why APEC, why China, why Shenzhen, and why this trilateral. Of course, everything that was building up from the beginning, from Wednesday when it started to Thursday, was about the trilateral, which took place around 4:30 p.m. local time. And we could see from the beginning the degree of synchronicity between the Russians and the Chinese, right? Obviously, the beyond-stupid Western mainstream media only focused on Xi Jinping going to pick up Trump at the airport.

Well, that was a diplomatic courtesy because this is what Trump did when Xi visited the U.S. The most important thing is what had happened before. And this was on day one, in the morning of day one. We had the first important bilateral meeting. And guess what it was? Russia-China. This was the fifth time that Putin and Xi met this year. They had a long bilateral meeting where, of course, they were coordinating what was going to happen on Wednesday, especially on Thursday, all the

way to the trilateral. Only after that did Xi go to the airport to pick up Trump. Then, pay attention to what happened on day one during Xi's keynote address. The keynote address was extraordinary in terms of bridging geopolitics and business.

So Xi essentially made a connection to the current five-year plan, which runs all the way to 2030. And by 2030, the Chinese government wants 70% of the Chinese economy to be completely driven, connected, and organized by artificial intelligence. This is ahead of any government on Earth. And he connected this domestic goal, of course, with international business in APEC. He proposed something that obviously won't be accepted because of the other two partners: one is a colony, and the other is completely unreliable—Japan and the United States. He proposed an interconnection in terms of business and ultra-high-tech development between here, the Greater Bay Area...

I am here now in Guangzhou, which is the number one city in the Greater Bay Area because it's the capital of Guangdong province. Shenzhen is, to be exact, 37 minutes from here by high-speed rail. So, literally around the corner. But we also have Dongguan. We have Macau, of course, and Zhuhai. And on the other side, we have Hong Kong, which is an international center. It used to be the messenger or the go-between between international capital and China. Now international capital invests directly in China. That's what has changed, especially in the past 10 years or so.

So Xi proposed uniting the Greater Bay Area, which is this gigantic high-tech cluster here in southern China, in the Pearl River Delta and linked to Hong Kong, with the Bay Area in the US, which is San Francisco all the way to Silicon Valley, and with the Tokyo Bay Area in Japan. The simple fact that he actually proposed that in front of the major CEOs of most of the major companies from the Asia-Pacific's 21 economies is enormous. Linking, of course, the high-tech development of China with the high-tech development of, let's say, the larger APEC area. CEOs love the idea. We don't know about politicians. In the case of Japan, it's even worse, because that ridiculous prime minister that they have at the moment, she was ignored by everybody in Shenzhen.

People didn't even want to talk to her, especially the Southeast Asians. The Southeast Asians still have a tremendous historical problem with the Japanese. And, of course, everybody noticed the way she was practically dismissed by Chinese diplomacy. And by the way, Trump even bothered to talk to her. Well, so this was day one. The most important news on day one was business and, of course, the CEO business meeting, which had taken place before. And this was essential because APEC is essentially a business organization covering the whole Asia-Pacific region. In my column, I explain what APEC is all about. In fact, most people—and even the Anglo-American media—don't even know what APEC is.

This was an American invention. The first big APEC meeting was in 1994 in Indonesia, and I had the chance to be there because that was the year I moved to Asia. It was under Clinton, and Clinton was received like a rock star in Indonesia. And at the time, APEC basically was—okay, the short version—the Americanization of Asia. You're going to have to follow our trade practices. You're going to have to open markets to all of us. And basically, we're going to run your economy from the U.S.

Can you imagine? This was the early ’90s, even before the financial crisis in ’97–’98, which obviously was engineered from abroad.

Americans came to South Korea, Indonesia, and Thailand especially and got everything for a pittance after these three economies—and others—collapsed. They didn't manage to do that in Malaysia, for instance, because Malaysia introduced capital controls at the time. Okay, APEC. So, what was initially organized as a trade organization to contain China or to subdue China—what we had this year here in Shenzhen was the absolute opposite. The Chinese turned the whole thing upside down. And now they are the most important power at APEC. And now they can suggest to the whole Asia-Pacific region, “Look, this is how we're going to do business from now on.”

In fact, we are already doing business like that because, after all, we are the top trade partner of all of you, practically with no exceptions. So this was the most important part. And then, of course, on the second day, which was Thursday, we had the other important bilateral meeting, which was Trump–Xi. Very, very short. It lasted a little over 10 minutes. So obviously, the Chinese were not interested in what Trump was blah-blah-blah-ing about. And we had Russia–U.S. That was much, much longer. That was, I think, over an hour. And they were discussing Ukraine. So everybody was assuming that they discussed Ukraine in the bilateral meetings.

And like Ushakov was saying until the last minute, no, they're not going to discuss Ukraine in the trilateral. In the end, they did. So between the morning and the afternoon of the second day, Thursday, everybody was saying, “Okay, what are they actually going to discuss?” There was a very short list, in fact. But that changed at the last minute. So in the end, they really did discuss Ukraine, and we learned this via the Chinese. The Chinese talked to some of us. They gave us a short list of what was discussed—a short summary, at least. They talked about denuclearization, which is very rich coming from the United States, to say the least.

#Danny

Only tearing up all the accords. Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

#Pepe Escobar

Exactly. Well, they discussed Ukraine because Trump wanted to discuss Ukraine with Xi, even though they had already discussed it with Putin. They came to the obvious conclusion that the UN must be revamped, but with no details. And there were no leaks anywhere. Okay, how is this going to happen? Is this a reform of the whole UN, just the Security Council, or both? New statutes? We don't know. And, of course, Iran, obviously. As you know, the Chinese are extremely circumspect when it comes to making information public that concerns other nations. They see this as interference. But there were some hints that they did discuss Iran in detail. And then the next day, Danny, we got the most important, the most interesting consequence of what was discussed at the table.

And this is something that we learned yesterday. I talked about that on our channel, Transition Protocol. The Chinese passed on to the Iranians, almost in real time—like a few minutes after the end of the trilateral—what was discussed about them at the table. And this went to Mohsen Rezai, who informed the leader, Mostafa Khamenei, about it. They said, look, basically Trump said that if the Iranians have petrol tankers leaving the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz heading towards—guess where?—China, he would not attack them. They will all go to China, in fact. So immediately after the leader learned about that, he gave the order: "Okay, let's go for it." Let's go for what I'm calling the Persian tanker swarm.

And there's even a beautiful miniature copied from an original miniature from the mid-16th century. I posted that on my X with a tanker in the middle. You see this beautiful medieval miniature, Persian style, very sophisticated. In the middle, you have this big tanker. So they are about to leave this weekend. This is something that could happen by the end of the weekend or by Monday. There are different numbers. Probably three will start, but there are another 14 around Kharg. So we could have nearly 20 petrol tankers leaving Kharg, crossing Hormuz, going in the direction of the Gulf of Oman and then the Arabian Sea, all the way to China. And, of course, one of the reasons that the Chinese brought this to the table is that the destination of these tankers is China.

So China is directly implicated in whatever happens, even though, at least for the moment, we still don't know if there are any Chinese petrol tankers among them. No, probably they are all Iranian. But the destination is ports in eastern China. And that brings us to the cliffhanger of this weekend and early next week. Those options for Trump are absolutely horrible. If the petrol tankers go through, that's the end of the naval blockade, and that's a massive, stratospheric humiliation of the hegemon. If he attacks the petrol tankers—once again, everybody in the leadership of the IRGC has already said it—if there's even one attack against one of the petrol tankers, "We are going to counterpunch against American assets all across the Persian Gulf and energy installations in the petromonarchies."

So this is where we are at the moment. It is an extremely risky but brilliant gambit, in fact, because there's no good option for the Trump administration. And, obviously, it follows: never underestimate the Persians. They always come up with something that puts you between a rock and a hard place. It took a while, but they finally found it. They won't take the initiative. For instance, they won't launch a preemptive attack if they have good intel that the Americans and the Israelis together are going to attack Iran. No. This is, let's say, a peaceful flotilla full of oil. If it's attacked by the U.S., that's it. Then there's going to be a counterattack. It's extremely well reasoned. It's very logical. And obviously, the Trump administration is paralyzed now. So what are they going to do?

Especially after Trump, according to our best information, promised Xi that he would not attack these petrol tankers, which, once again, are all going to China. So I would say that this was the most important practical consequence of the trilateral, Danny. The trilateral in itself, of course, for all of us who were there—you could feel history being made. No question about that. You could check the

body language. You could see that Trump's movements were visibly awkward. You could sense that he was out of his depth because he was alone in the same room with the two most powerful political leaders on the planet. And these guys—this is not European chihuahua bullshit. This is the real deal. And on top of it, a strategic partnership.

And on top of it, they had already discussed what they were going to discuss with Trump at the table because they had met before. So Trump arrived at an extreme disadvantage. And in the end, of course, we had the photo op. Everybody was expecting that. Everybody was expecting a press conference, for instance, but we didn't have one. No, Trump went directly to the airport. We had that four-point final declaration, which is extremely vague. It's very short. You can read it in two or three minutes, right? A very vague declaration. But, okay, if you try to give it the benefit of the doubt, at least they are saying that it's impossible to have a nuclear war. And I'm sure that this was Xi and Putin, side by side, telling Trump, "Look, this is for you. You're thinking about throwing a nuclear device on Pickaxe Mountain. You have been asking your generals for months, 'Why can't we throw a bomb against Iran?' Look, this is for you."

#Danny

Did you catch that the Russian delegation brought the nuclear football and showed it to the media? I mean, you know, it's not unusual for a head of state to have the nuclear football with him, but his delegation was like, “Look, it's the nuclear football.” That's what it is.

#Pepe Escobar

Nuclear football, exactly. So obviously, when dealing directly with Trump, you have to be very blunt. Otherwise, he doesn't get it. And the only thing that he respects is hard power. And he was in front of two holders of hard power. So, of course, Danny, nobody has any clue what will happen afterwards. He's going to change his mind, whatever. But at least they had this conversation face to face. The UN was blah, blah, blah, because we know that nothing's going to happen. The Americans simply won't let it happen, whoever is in power in the US. So in terms of a gigantic geopolitical day in the 21st century, yes, it's true.

Once again, we have to repeat the obvious for people who still have not understood. It was not a Yalta 2.0 because we didn't have three victors. We had one that is winning the geoeconomic war. We had two fighting a high-tech war, and we still don't know which way it's going, but it seems to be turning a corner. We have the largest nuclear power in the world, which is also the only Oreshnik-style hypersonic nuclear power. So it was not three victors. We could say that, in terms of victors and losers, this was more or less out in the open. But they are, in fact, the big three.

So this was not a G3. I prefer to call it the end of the G1. I discussed this with some Chinese analysts, and there is a sort of consensus, even among the Chinese, that from now on, it's absolutely impossible to discuss anything of consequence on the planet, whatever the issue at hand,

without Russia and China. I would say that Shenzhen seals the death of the G1, even though we still don't know what comes next. We could have, for instance, the big three meeting once a year or twice a year. It's not impossible. But the Chinese hate the idea of a G2 or G3 because they don't want to be caught in the position of lecturing the rest of the world, and especially the Global South.

Because you've been to China, Danny, and you know it: China still sees itself as a member of the Global South. A leader of the Global South, a member of the Global South, not the Global North, the dominating West, all that crap. And of course, what happened was fascinating. There were very, very few Europeans in Shenzhen, by the way, apart from the BBC. And Europe was not on the table. Europe was not on the menu. And Europe was not even catching some crumbs from the banquet at the table. They were completely, totally ignored. So this was one of the major lessons of that Shenzhen day, absolutely.

#Pepe Escobar

And of course, to get into more prosaic matters, the battalions of Western mainstream media, especially the Anglo-American media, were gobsmacked when they saw Shenzhen in front of them. They couldn't process it. It was too much for them. And they were all trying to find, okay, is there anything wrong going on here? And it's fascinating because even with all the pomp and circumstance, everything was impeccable. The organization was amazing. The security was ultra-hardcore, no question, including for local residents. But, you know, on the second day, in the middle of the day, I took a quick break and went to old Shenzhen.

So you go to a side alley, not very far from downtown, in fact, and they were living like they were living 40, 50 years ago, when it was still a fishing village, you know? Small businesses, you know, people eating their typical Shenzhen hot pot, which is delicious, you know, street life. And this was, what, less than half an hour from the ultra-high-tech, 22nd-century downtown. So, you know, you have both Cantonese ways of life side by side. It's not that they cleaned up the city and expelled the people who live here during the summit. No, no, no. Life went on. Only, of course, I would say that they have at least three downtowns. Okay, two big ones. Within those two big downtowns, of course, there was ultra-high security, everything impeccably organized.

But the city was still functioning normally. I took the metro every day. The metro was packed all the time. Even though a lot of people were given a day off, a lot of people were also working. So it was like a normal two days in Shenzhen. The whole spectacle was something to watch, really. And I'm sure we're all going to have a lot of time to process everything. But the immediate consequences are very frustrating, in fact, because only a few hours after the end of the trilateral, guess what was in the headlines everywhere? The forever wars, because of the NATO attack on the Kerch Bridge in Crimea, which was timed exactly for the day before the summit.

And of course, Iran, where the leader's directive was “neither war nor peace,” which is something that the Chinese understood very, very well, and so did the Russians. And that was on the table in

Shenzhen. We're going to have immediate repercussions following the summit, linked to what was said at the table, which, of course, the Chinese interpreted as Trump saying, "Okay, I don't want this war to continue." But did the Chinese interpret it right? Was that a spur-of-the-moment statement? Is there any evidence that Trump has abandoned kinetic war against Iran? No. But we are now, this week and early next week, in one of those very dangerous cliffhangers, and this cliffhanger may be the mother of all cliffhangers. Because something's got to give, and somebody's got to give. And as you know, it's not going to be Tehran.

#Danny

No. Well, Pepe, great points there, because right before this summit and during it, you had the U.S. reportedly conducting quote-unquote limited strikes on places like Qeshm Island. And then, of course, you had the Iranian response, which we put up earlier. They not only blew the hell out of ships in the Strait of Hormuz, but also hit some assets in the Gulf region and fired at fighter jets, even saying that they'd hit one.

But then after the summit, Trump said that Iran has been BSing people, meaning them, for 51 years. And as you said, Iran won't be the one to back down. And as you can see here, everyone, he says quite directly that "Iran does not want to make a deal acceptable to me." And my question to you, Pepe, is: today Iran released another video of one of their missile cities. They're demonstrating that they have— This is the new one? This one you're showing is the new one? Yeah, that's the report.

#Pepe Escobar

This is the new one, right?

#Danny

Yeah, right, right. And what this demonstrates, Pepe, is that Iran is very capable of hitting back very hard. They've been communicating this quite clearly, both in action and in words. And how much of this is creating problems? Because I know Trump went into this trilateral summit wanting to discuss Iran. You said that they did discuss Iran, but ultimately, Iran seems to be the one that has the cards here, especially when it comes to escalation. So what do you make of that dangerous cliffhanger you just noted when Trump himself is even saying that Iran isn't backing down?

#Pepe Escobar

First of all, where did he get these 51 years from? No, no, no, no, no. This is so stupid. This would be, what, 1975? In 1975, the Shah was running Iran.

#Danny

I know. The United States was quite pleased with Iran in 1975. They were satisfied, I think, with the regime.

#Pepe Escobar

And, you know, so once again, Danny, that's the problem. The assholes around here are so misinformed about anything to do with Iran. Probably one of them slipped him this number, and he repeated it like a parrot, obviously without checking, because he doesn't check anything. Wonderful. I remember 1975. I was in college at the time, and the Shah of Iran was running Iran. And many of us were planning to go overland from London to Iran and Afghanistan. At the time, you could do that. You could take the Magic Bus in London and go to Iran and Afghanistan. 1975. So were they already plotting against the United States? Wow. Okay. Anyway.

Coming back to the key point, Danny, this is something that has been reiterated by probably everybody speaking on the record: Mohsen Rezaei, Ghalibaf, Araghchi, President Pezeshkian, people from the Majlis, the leadership of the IRGC, you name it. They are not scared of anything, and they will fight to the end. This is something that Pezeshkian said once again earlier today, in fact: "We will not bend our knee. We will fight to the end." And it's like they were more or less expecting a final green light coming from the leader, Mojtaba Khamenei. It came a few days ago, when he had a meeting with all the military leaders and reiterated: "That's the end of 'neither war nor peace.'"

"And if we are attacked, you have no limits, and you have no geographical limits." They were all expecting something like that. And now the decision that he reconfirmed, in fact, after Shenzhen: "Okay, let's break the blockade our way, with dispersion and a tanker swarm." They know the possible consequences, but they're going for it. And the whole military doctrine changed completely. It's not mosaic defense anymore. Now they will go on the offensive, finally. And we can say it has much to do with public clamor all around Iran, because people see that the economic situation is very, very difficult. Their purchasing power was practically disappearing.

There is an oil and fuel crisis, so something has to be done. And obviously, Mojtaba pays a lot of attention to the mood in the street, which is something that his father used to do as well. He learned from his father. That's it. So now they're going for broke, finally. And there will be no other way to unblock this situation. For the Trump administration, the current situation is very, very easy. They don't need to invest in and engage in a war. They are practically carrying out economic strangulation from afar. It's a very comfortable position. Iran cannot possibly sustain it, accept it, and go along with it. So once again, we are at a much more dangerous crossroads now than even before the trilateral in Shenzhen.

#Danny

And Pepe, I wanted to ask you about this too. You know, one of the points in the declaration that was published directly after the trilateral summit was that all three countries—the United States, Russia, and China—are going to increase the production and trade of petroleum products.

#Pepe Escobar

Petroleum products.

#Danny

Some people read that as Russia and China agreeing with Trump that the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, should be open, free from any obstacles. But it's so vague that that's all interpretation. What do you make of this point? Because I know that there are some people who are concerned about some of the vagueness. My interpretation of Putin and Xi being around the table with Trump, and all the deliberations beforehand, is that they're just, in their heads, being like, "This is the best we can do. This is all we can really agree with the empire of chaos on." But what are your thoughts about this point in particular, and maybe some concerns about it?

#Pepe Escobar

It's a minimalistic agreement. You're right. They could only agree on the very vague language in this paragraph among the four points. It reflects the official Chinese position. The official Chinese position, which they have explained over and over again, is: "We want the free flow of trade through the Strait of Hormuz." At the same time, they respect Iranian sovereignty, and they know that the new navigational system in Hormuz—in the north, in Iranian territorial waters, and in the south, in Omani territorial waters—is going to be something completely different.

And they know that Iran and Oman have already reached a partial agreement on how this is going to work. The Chinese follow this very, very closely because, for them, the energy that flows to China is a matter of national security. So they respect Iranian sovereignty over Hormuz. They support an arrangement between Iran and Oman. And they also emphasize the security of the petromonarchies because, after all, they are also, guess what, Chinese trade partners—all of them. So the Chinese position is, let's say, basically the Chinese saying, "Look, we want a win-win. Iran wins, the petromonarchies win, and we as customers win because we buy energy from all of you."

So I would say that the logical part of this very vague statement in the final declaration reflects the Chinese point of view. We don't have a specific statement from Russia on how it sees navigation in the Strait of Hormuz because, for instance, Lavrov never got into detail. The Russians see this as an Iranian matter and something that the Iranians have to discuss with the Gulf petromonarchies,

especially Oman. And the Americans, as we know, want the status quo ante, which obviously is never going to happen. So no wonder the only thing they could agree on in the end was this very vague language, right?

#Danny

Well, Pepe, how about maybe some lightness as we come to the conclusion here in the last 15, 20 minutes or so? We can lighten the mood a bit with some of the other highlights of how the establishment reacted to the summit, as well as some curious and actually quite funny words from Trump. Here is one thing I wanted to bring up. The Economist, right after the trilateral summit, published this cover story: "The Axis of Malice: The Four Spoilers Menacing the West." And so you have drones with the flags of Russia, Iran, China, and the DPRK. It's kind of hard to see the flags because the artwork, to be honest, is, I think, trying to do a kind of Cold War-esque realism.

#Pepe Escobar

The one on top is North Korea, right?

#Danny

Yep, DPRK, North Korea, China, Iran, and Russia. So that's how the West is reacting to this. The United States mainstream media: "For Xi and Putin, the Trump trilateral was a win for the new world order." And then I wanted to share this because we talked about it a little bit before the show. You know, I saw a post on X recently that said something to the effect of, "Trump really troubles me sometimes because, while I know he's evil, every once in a while he comes out with these generational truth bombs that are quite surprising." And here's Donald Trump talking about China, which is so interesting because so few people can say this. Even those who consider themselves to be pro-multipolar world, pro-self-determination, and anti-war have a hard time saying this. Here's Donald Trump.

#Pepe Escobar

You say, "Oh, he said he was a great man." Well, he runs 1.4 billion people. And when you look at those cities, they're clean, and they're nice, and there's no crime, and they've got a lot of things going for them. That's him talking about Xi Jinping.

#Danny

So, Pepe, are you interested in any of this? Can you imagine?

#Pepe Escobar

The degree of frustration, Danny. The guy comes from Washington, which is—come on, Washington is a joke as a capital city. And he goes to Shenzhen, which is not even a first-tier city. It's a second-tier city. Okay, so it's a Valhalla in technological terms, but it's a second-tier city. Here, Guangzhou is a first-tier city, along with Shanghai and Beijing, for us. And, you know, he sticks his neck out of his limo, and he sees urban perfection everywhere he goes. He has to be shattered by what he saw. Another thing: I wish you would have played the Stephen "Goebbels" Miller clip, when Trump introduced him as, "You want to be the next president of the United States," or whatever.

And this was one of the scariest moments in modern American history. The new chief of staff is, wow, something to watch. Much more dangerous than the president being in love with Shenzhen's streets. But I'm still wrapping my head around that 51-year thing. This is definitely my favorite. So Iran was already threatening America in 1974. But one extra thing. Sorry, Danny. I was time-traveling. This Economist cover—people have to understand where it's coming from. The Economist is a Rothschild asset. The Rothschilds sold their stake, essentially, but the most important shareholders are the Elkann family, mega-Zionists.

Well, I have friends in Torino who know them very, very well. They used to work for La Stampa, the big Torino newspaper. And the Elkanns married into the Agnelli family. Mega, mega, mega Zionists. And, of course, totally part of the Rothschild gang. So when you see The Economist, you don't see journalism. You see what they want to happen. You see them pushing that on, I would say, unsuspecting customers. And a lot of people just buy The Economist out of inertia—in many cases, for decades. And when you look at those "The Year Ahead" covers—the latest one, the cover of The Economist for 2027—there are all sorts of interpretations. Some of them are absolutely fantastic.

And as creepy and as satanic as these interpretations are, they are not far off the mark. Because these people drive events. They don't comment on events. They don't do journalism. This is what they want to happen. So, "axes of malice"—they are already coining a phrase that reflects the way the more or less invisible real elites of the West see it. But they also want the rest of the planet to buy into the way they see it. It's even more dangerous than that idiot who coined the "axis of evil" in 2002, David Frum, because nobody bought it at the time.

Now this is much more vicious, because they are losing control. It's not by accident that you have this cover coming out in the week of the trilateral meeting in Shenzhen, and in the week when, in desperation, they try to derail the trilateral in Shenzhen by attacking the Crimea Bridge. This is something they've tried many times before, but this was timed exactly for the start of the trilateral. The attack was a NATO operation. Everybody knows it, with direct participation by the Dutch, of course, but essentially organized by MI6, because MI6 organizes these operations in Ukraine. So it's a parallel trajectory. I'm sorry.

They are getting more and more anxious and angry because they are not winning on any front. And now that they see how powerful Russia and China are together—because this is a strategic partnership—and how they can literally stare down the President of the United States, you know,

they're going to become even more aggressive, no question. They are betting on total destruction on both sides of the Strait of Hormuz. This is what they would really like to happen, in fact. They're going to force Trump's hand to go for kinetic action. They are going to keep pouring zillions of euros that Europe doesn't have into the war in Ukraine, for NATO and the European Union to sustain those gangsters in Kiev.

So they cannot abandon these two battlefields. That's why it's dangerous, because they are starting to feel cornered. And when extremely powerful, wealthy people are cornered, watch out, because their tentacles are everywhere. And for instance, what happened in Brazil, even if it was minor compared to Ukraine and Iran—wow. Wow. They were not expecting that. They were betting all their money, literally, on turning Brazil into a new colony. For the moment, it's not working. It's not over yet, but for the moment, it's not working. So once again, all their efforts are concentrated on, okay, let's destroy West Asia, which is what they would ultimately like to do. And let's make this impossible for Russia.

The strategic defeat of NATO is already imprinted everywhere, but they will keep trying to turn this around. So it's very, very, very dangerous. It's good that I left Shenzhen, and now I'm here and I can walk. Tonight I was walking around. I said, look, I need time to process this whole thing. When we were still there, for instance, Thursday night, I was very euphoric about the whole thing. I said, wow, finally. Is this a light at the end of the tunnel? Is this a glimpse of hope and all that? But when you start looking into the reverberations and how these people who do a cover like that, "Axis of Malice," are going to react in the short and long term, it's going to get even more dangerous than it is now.

#Danny

Well, maybe as a final question to you, Pepe, because it's a big one. Yes. And I heard you talk about it on other shows. Has the Trilateral Summit succeeded in what some have suggested? You've said this, and I know I read a recent column from our friend Scott Ritter. Yes. Has it succeeded in reducing the likelihood of a Third World War scenario, albeit, of course, in a different form, between Russia, China, and the United States? Given that, you know, Trump still has two years left, but we know the direction the rest of the establishment wants to go. You just outlined it to a degree. So has it succeeded in that? I don't know if it was a goal, but maybe it was an unintended outcome, or maybe an outcome that Putin and Xi had in their back pocket: wanting to reduce the likelihood of a major confrontation, which has been building for so many years now, as you know and as you've been following.

#Pepe Escobar

Well, Danny, if we take that paragraph of the final declaration at face value—maybe Scott was reading it that way—it is a glimpse of hope. Because at least we have the big three sitting at the same table and reaching an obvious conclusion: we cannot have a nuclear war. We need to start

denuclearizing. And as Putin was saying, if there is a next war, it's going to be the last one. More than obvious. But, as you just mentioned correctly, we still have two years of Trump. Will he be in control? What about the people who really run the show in the US? What if they actually think they can get away with a nuclear first strike? That's something that is routinely discussed in Washington. So this goes way beyond Trump. Is he the ultimate decider?

Not really. And that's the problem. If he were the ultimate decider, everybody could breathe, you know? Okay, let's relax a little bit because he said, no, there's not going to be a nuclear war. But we know the sociopathic mentality. We know he's psychologically unbalanced. We know he's visibly out of his depth, as he proved in Shenzhen. He was very uncomfortable most of the time. And is he in command? Not necessarily. And that's why things get very complicated. Once again, coming back to this Economist cover, this is the way they think. Don't forget, this is the way they think. They identify the four existential threats. They cannot get rid of these existential threats, but they think that they could in a nuclear way. This is seriously how they see it.

#Danny

Well, on that note, Pepe, as we begin to close here, this is the full text of the declaration. And as you noted, the final paragraph gives a glimmer of hope when you see these leaders together putting down on paper that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, and that the three countries will hold a dialogue on reducing nuclear risks and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. What's interesting about this, though, Pepe, is that the United States and Donald Trump himself have done a lot of work to reduce the treaties that exist to curb the use of nuclear weapons, including Trump tearing up the INF in his first administration. So, lots of things to watch, I think, when it comes to how this is put into practice. But your final words on where we are right now, and anything that you'd like to close with as we wrap up here?

#Pepe Escobar

Okay. Staying with this fourth paragraph, Danny, the Chinese were not keen on discussing denuclearization from the beginning. This particular issue was included under American pressure, because the Chinese basically reason this way: look, you both have gigantic arsenals of over 5,000 nuclear weapons each. We have 600 or so. So if we're going to denuclearize, you have to denuclearize. So what are you going to do? Are you going to get rid of 4,000 each? Sorry, you're still going to have at least 1,000 each, and we still only have 600 or so. So what kind of denuclearization program is that? And, of course, the unspoken question: what about Israel, which is the key problem? It's an undeclared nuclear power. How are you going to deal with that? So you have to come up with a completely different treaty. Who said that maybe we should get rid of all nuclear weapons? Somebody said that these past few days. I don't remember who. Do you remember? I don't. But anyway, this is also not feasible.

#Danny

Right.

#Pepe Escobar

So to expect that the Russians and the Americans will voluntarily commit to destroying most of their own nuclear weapons in the near future—sorry, this is Alice in Wonderland. And that explains why the Chinese were not very keen on discussing it. And that explains this very, very vague language: "We'll hold a dialogue." Okay. Doesn't mean anything. "Reducing nuclear risks." My point: get rid of Israel's nuclear weapons. Will the Americans ever do something like this? Never. Never. "Preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons." Of course, what the Americans immediately think about is Iran. But other mid-ranking powers are starting to have ideas now as well. So this simple paragraph, with this very, very vague language, doesn't solve anything. In fact, the only thing that we know for sure is that they actually discussed it at the table, but they could not possibly reach a wide-ranging and very precise conclusion.

#Danny

Mm-hmm. Right. Well, Pepe, we've reached the hour here. I want to make sure that everybody knows that your latest piece, which I pulled up earlier, is in the video description below, as well as your Telegram and your X account. So people should follow all of that after the show. Thank you. After you hit the like button, be sure to subscribe here, and then go to the video description and find all of Pepe's work. I want to thank everyone who gave a Super Chat today. Very generous of you. Really appreciate that. Pepe and I will leave here together, and I will see you all again tomorrow. I'll let you know what's happening very soon. All right, everyone. Good morning, good afternoon, good night, wherever you are in the world. Take care. See you tomorrow, Sunday.

#Pepe Escobar

Thanks, everybody. Cheers. Bye-bye.