

The Raging Twenties Review: Pipelinistan, Sino-Russia and more

Conversations with Pepe Escobar and Ken Stone. Transcript included.

By [Michael Welch](#), [Pepe Escobar](#), and [Ken Stone](#)

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Region: [Asia](#), [Canada](#), [China](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#), [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR](#), [Media Disinformation](#), [Military and Militarization](#), [WMD](#), [Oil and Energy](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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- Pepe Escobar, from this week’s interview (below).

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With the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, people began to enjoy a period of relative peace they had not known about in well over half a century. [1]

That blissful existence came to an end by the end of the twentieth century with NATO mobilized in the wake of managing conflict in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and eventually Kosovo. But then the pivotal event that put warfare back into focus was the 9/11 attacks and the so-called Global War on Terrorism.[2][3]

The pattern of attacks went as follows: Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia/Kenya, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. [4]

At first, the once damaged Russia started to become a problem when it absorbed Crimea into its territorial realm following a simple referendum. But by 2015 they let it be known that terrorist factions in Syria supported by US forces are not going to result in another broken State without major resistance. Getting involved in the war in Syria was the principle location where the Western gang realized players started to surface in a big way and let the Western world know there’s another power in town. [5][6][7]

Couple this with the rising power that is China and the fading power of the U.S. and it’s clear to see that another Cold War is on...with a vengeance![8]

Following four years of Trump resetting the stage for world diplomacy with a chaotic foreign

policy, we now have a Democrat in the White House who seems to be doing everything possible to burn whatever bridges might linger between the U.S. and its two major rivals.[9][10]

Having already started his administration with a violent attack on Iranian based militia in Syria supposedly in retaliation for attacks against U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq, followed by less than courteous exchanges in meetings with Russian and Chinese officials and multiple sanctions soon to be on the horizon, it is expected that the traction among the biggest countries on the globe can only deepen.

Now with COVID throw into the mix, where is all this going to lead? That is the magic question we will attempt to answer on this week's Global Research News Hour.

Dominating this episode, we are joined by none other than that globe trotting writer, journalist, and geopolitical analyst Pepe Escobar! As someone who has been a columnist and correspondent throughout Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, and throughout Central Asia and the Middle East, and as a man who is Brazilian by origin, he would no doubt bring a unique and even refreshing perspective to these global confrontations.

After that conversation, we turn the table and bring in a Canadian anti-war activist who operates from his home in Hamilton. Ken Stone ends our hour speaking to where the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War invests most of their time and energy in 2021.

Pepe Escobar, born in Brazil, is a correspondent and editor-at-large at Asia Times and columnist for Consortium News and Strategic Culture in Moscow. Since the mid-1980s he's lived and worked as a foreign correspondent in London, Paris, Milan, Los Angeles, Singapore, Bangkok. His most recent book is entitled Raging Twenties: Great Power Politics Meets Techno-Feudalism. He is also a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Ken Stone is a veteran antiwar activist, a former Steering Committee Member of the Canadian Peace Alliance, an executive member of the SyriaSolidarityMovement.org, and treasurer of the Hamilton Coalition To Stop The War [hcsw.ca]. Ken is author of "Defiant Syria", an e-booklet available at Amazon, iTunes, and Kobo. He lives in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

(Global Research News Hour episode 311)

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Transcript – Interview with Pepe Escobar, March 9, 2021.

Part One

Global Research: What did the Assad actually do or not do on a certain date to convince U. S. entities that this is the last straw, we're taking him out? Or was it just a long-time mission?

Pepe Escobar: Well, this touches the...the absolute inconsistency of US foreign policy. And the fact that the only thing that they can more or less agree on is that we need to prevent

Russia from doing this and doing that. We need to control Southwest Asia as a whole, we need to come up with a new bogeyman now that we don't have Saddam Hussein anymore. There's so many reasons.

One of the key reasons was a pipeline stuff as I call it. I wrote extensively about this 10 years ago, in fact. I tried to demonstrate that one of the key reasons for this demonization of Bashar al-Assad and engaging in a proxy war in Syria had to do with the fact that Iran, Iraq and Syria were more or less...they had already a memorandum of understanding to build a gas pipeline which would end up in the eastern Mediterranean and it would be an absolutely a strategic move for the three of them. Iran, Iraq and Syria. And this from the point of view of the U. S. deep state was an act of war, and of course, also from the point of view of Saudi Arabia and the point of view of Israel for different reasons.

So this was always the unstated motives to create a proxy war in Syria. So when you need to sell this through public opinion inside U.S. or at least across Atlanticist circles because obviously this was not bought by Eurasia, by Africa, by Latin America. So basically, you're talking in your bubble, in your Atlanticist bubble. You have to come up with a scarecrow, which was a very handy. Bashar al-Assad is killing his own people, so that became the mantra. Basically repeated 24/7 for years until the Russians saw one of the other ulterior motives of this whole operation, which was to basically corral Syrian forces in Latakia and probably create problems for a Syrian...a Russian naval base they used to militarize.

So there was one of the last straws for the Russians. The other one was the movement of a Jihadist or aspiring Jihadist in the Syrian theater, including a lot of people from the Southern Caucasus. Czechians, Kazakhstanis, et cetera, some people from Central Asia. Uzbeks, basically affiliated with the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan. Uyghurs from Xinjiang western China as well. For the Russians this, the Russian saw it basically on the map, which they know very well, that the distance from Aleppo to Growzy 900 kilometers.

So this became an obsession for Russian intelligence. It takes only 900 kilometers to have these Jihadis here in the underbelly of the Russian federation. So we have to, we need to do something about that. So when the decision arrived at the Kremlin and the Ministry of Defense to interfere in the Syria theater, the Russians already had the long view road map. So first of all, we're gonna go there with a small, in fact was a small task force but with some excellent aviation assets. We pose our presents. We coordinate on the ground, with ground forces at the Syrian Arab army, Hezbollah, Iranian advisers et cetera... so then we can create a moving organic mechanism to take care of these Jihadis, wherever they come from, whatever their affiliation, names, et cetera because it changes all the time in Syria. You have more than 100 different brigades, militias et cetera.

This happened in 2015, so since then that's it. There was the turning point, and obviously the people at the Pentagon and the whole Atlanticist circle they were caught. Wow, what do we do next? There's nothing you can do next, because once the Russian military get involved we're talking serious stuff, it's not a joke anymore.

So that's it. That after 10 years, what do we have? We have the virtual destruction of large straits of Syria. At least we now, we have re-construction going on in Damascus, in Aleppo, but we have parts of northeast Syria still occupied illegally by American forces which are still by the way stealing their oil as they were during the Trump administration. And we have the major problem which in the northwest, the Idlib cauldron which is a tremendous problem in terms of... the Syrian Arab army by itself cannot take over this whole region in Idlib without

inflicting major civilian casualties, and that's the number one reason why they haven't done it yet.

So you need a very complex air and ground operations once again involving everybody: Russian aviation, Hezbollah, Iranian advisors, the Syrian Arab army and then you create a cauldron with only Jihadis inside and you take them out. So this is something that takes a while. So it takes, for instance retaking village by village, which is at the stage that we are on now for instance, including crazy, there is a sort of new Jihadi hub very close to Aleppo again.

So you know, it's a hard slog, little by little, so we have to exterminate, nail Jihadi hub then you have to take the next village, et cetera...this is something that takes months, you know, but it's inevitable. There will be a final offensive which is may be, what, one year away maybe, not before that.

What is the geopolitical consequence of all that? The reinforcement of what in southwest Asia is known as the "Axis of Resistance"... Iran, Iraq, Syria, Hezbollah. The problem, there is no final victory because there won't be a final victory because even if you exterminate the Jihadis, even if some of the Jihadis are transported to Afghanistan, as they did from the Syrian theatre to that outfit called, calling themselves ISIS Khorasan there are at least 3 to 4000 former Syrian Jihadis in Afghanistan, part of ISIS Khorasan. But at least if you can have most of Syrian territory back to Damascus control which is not the case at the moment, if you can have 90 percent of Syrian territory back to Syria, to their rightful owners, you can consider that a victory but we're still far away from that.

What we know for sure by now is that the proxy war by the usual suspects, by imperial interests with Saudi Arabia weaponizing and financing behind, with Israel obviously all the time creating all sorts of hells to the Syrian military. They lost this war because the Russian intervention in 2015 which was straight to the point. When the Russians started to send in those missiles from ships in the Caspian with absolutely precision maneuvering, I'm sure the Pentagon got the message and in fact they did. The problem is the neocons, the hidden interests in the Belt Way et cetera, but that's it. And whatever they come up next, it's going to be a special forces operation, it's going to be pinpointed operations here or there, but it's not going to change the outcome, essentially.

GR: Well we've got, I mean, there's so many different interests there. I mean you're not just United States and Russia but Turkey and the Kurds as well, Israel of course, and so however I you got the United States continuing to maintain control over certain key areas so it's you know, the idea of a regime change so to speak is out of the question, but at the end of the day you have these, your major forces some of them have interests in common, others they contradict, but at the end of the game, I mean, I'm just wondering , maybe Syria. I don't know if it's going to be in such good shape. But who among the outside rivals, who's winning? Who's losing? Did you have a way to tell what the outcome is going to be?

PE: Yeah, no, I don't think in terms of winning and losing. It so...it's much more complicated than that. it's a basically extendage of political influence. So from the point of view of battle-hardened Hezbollah commanders for instance, or very good Iranian military advisors, you know, this is a win for that. They have battleground experience now in terms of coordinating forces throughout the Axis of Resistance. It's a win for them in terms of possible, hopefully not possible, future wars in southwest Asia.

In terms of a Syrian unity among the population to defend the state of Syria, the nation state Syria against this bunch of Takfis, male Jihadis, infiltrated agents, fifth columnists, you name it, that was a demonstration of force. That was great. That was an example for the whole global south in fact. If your nation is attacked not only by foreign forces, but also by infiltrated agents, by fifth columnists inside your nation state, this is how you do to get rid of them, this is how, this is what you do to win. And we see that in this renewed pride among Syrians that we are rebuilding Damascus we are rebuilding Aleppo, we are rebuilding Palmyra. This is very, very important and of course there's nothing they can do about the north east because there is this American force over there, so they have to make it clear for the Americans that one day they're going to have to leave.

So this is, this is a hard slog, look at Iraq for instance. And that once the Americans are somewhere, in their hubs, lily pads, mini pile of bases, of large bases, like in Iraq they don't leave. We know that. So in Afghanistan for instance, most Afghans are dreaming of a Saigon 1975 moment. The Americas essentially because of deep state interests and geopolitical interests they cannot afford, according to their interpretation, to leave a base right in the middle of Eurasia, in the case of Afghanistan, or very important bases right in the center of Mesopotamia and very close to the eastern Mediterranean, same thing.

So this is going to be protracted, whoever is in power in the White House, it doesn't matter if you have Trump, Biden, you know a dog, whatever, it doesn't matter. What matters is the long term so-called strategic interests of the predominant factions in the deep state. And for them, it's anathema to abandon a theater. In all this region, from the rim land to the heartland, from the eastern Mediterranean to the Hindu Kush, what they used to call greater Middle East, you know, and they are losing on all fronts, but still that's not enough, they never learned their lesson.

Intermission

Part Two

GR: Now I mean Russia and China seem to have a such a tight concept now, and they're banded together, and I'm wondering if the U.S. ...facing an adversary with the those two powers. Is this new adversary something that they can ultimately defeat, or is their control of the dollar and its expensive military help to maintain their dominance? What do you think of that?

PE: Well, the owners of the empire, the guys who run the show, they are terrified because everything that they heard from other people like Brzezinski since the nineties, even before the end of the millennium, Brzezinski was the guy who basically conceptualized the ultimate nightmare which was the emergence a peer competitor in Eurasia. This had to be prevented at all costs. Now you have not only eight peer competitors but a strategic partnership of peer competitors.

And it gets even worse because one of them has military superiority over the U.S. The U.S., in terms of state-of-the-art weaponry in hypersonic weapons is generations behind Russia. And this is something that has been proven by Andrei Martyanov which is arguably, if not the top, one of the 3 top military analysts in the world, and it helps that he is, he was born in the former Soviet Union, in Azerbaijan in Baku, but he works in the U.S. for a long time and he knows the industrial military complex from the inside. So his comparisons are real politics based and based in actual weaponry developed on both sides and the state of the Russian

industrial military complex and the state of the American industrial military complex.

So when you read Martyanov it's all there, including mathematical equations, the stuff that most people have no clue how to interpret, everything. And he's only one of them, we're not even talking about the Russian guys who only write in Russian, in Russian military journals et cetera.

And China obviously all know what's going on. It is already the largest trade power in the world, commercial power in the world. They're striking a deal, a free trade deal with European Union which is a major game changer. Everybody in Asia, their major trade partner is China. Where I am here, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Pan ASEAN, the major partner for the ten of them is China.

The place I live here, the Chinese tower I live here is a Chinese tower, it's owned by Chinese. The business center here in Bangkok is owned by Chinese, essentially. So...and obviously all the global ramifications in terms of, since the launch of the New Silk Road, the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013. And that in Chinese terms eight years is nothing. And if you look at the original timetable of implementation of a new Silk Road projects it starts in 2021, so what we have so far these first eight years was just planning, preparation. So this is an extremely long term project which is something that so called China experts in U.S. are absolutely clueless because they're thinking what's going to happen next week or quarterly? They can never think five years, ten years, fifteen years.

Last year, last week we had the presentation of the next 5-year plan in China. I wrote a detailed column about that. Not only they were presented the next 5-year plan 2021 to 2025 we were presenting three subsequent plans all the way to 2035. They're already thinking about the technical commercial configuration of China in 2035 so that's the... I would say cosmically, the cosmic difference between the way the Chinese think about the future and the way the West, especially the U. S. thinks about the future.

So now, what we have, we have the so-called masters of the universe or the people who run the industrial military complex in the U.S. they look at this strategic partnership between Russia and China and say, "What we do next?"

We have nothing. First of all, we have nothing to offer the global south, nothing absolutely nothing. There's no American project selling an American vision to help Eurasia, to help Africa, to help the interconnection between Eurasia and Africa, to help Latin America, nothing. The country is completely indebted, it's corroded inside, it's rotten to the core inside. Outside has absolutely no credibility in terms of foreign policy. So you know, you have people who control the funds, of course they control the global financial markets, but they look at the possible, little by little, of course, this is a work in progress. Germany, Russia...entente cordiale as we used to say in the vast diplomatic language, Russian China solidifying their strategic partnership. The merge of projects by the Chinese in the New Silk Roads and across the New Silk Roads with the Russian vision for uniting Europe with Eurasia, which is called greater Eurasia, that's the official Russian policy. Which was elaborated by Russian think tanks that President Putin now shares this vision.

It's what the Minister of Foreign Relations in Moscow has been spreading and talking about. It includes a merge of Eurasian economic union and the Belt and Road Initiative, little by little, and different projects, but in the end, they are thinking about integrating Eurasia with two major players, Russia and China, other major players such as Iran, Pakistan, India,

Turkey, Kazakhstan as well, very important. Kazakhstan is a bridge between Russia and China and a bridge between these two ideas, and Kazakhstan happens to be a member of both. Kazakhstan is a member of Belt and Road and is a member of the Eurasia Economic Union.

So all these major powers across Eurasia, they are little by little uniting. They are seriously discussing mechanisms to bypass the U.S. dollar, which is the key point in all this. It involves the BRICS Bank, it involves the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, it involves all sorts of bilateral trade between all these powers with their own currencies bypassing U. S. dollar. So this is an immeasurable process, when we are here in Asia and watching it from the inside, and you know before COVID, in my case I was able to travel everywhere and see on the ground, this process going on, and you compare it to the paralysis and hysteria in fact, especially in US, and in Brussels, which is also corroded from the inside, the contrast is, wow, it's like intergalactic, you know. But obviously, when you have elites in the west which are self-referential, and they were used to profit from the rigged game that they installed post-1945 they simply cannot understand what's going on from their point of view on the other side of the world, here.

GR: COVID is perhaps an example of something that might have, you know, get you to change gears a little bit. What kind of differences have come as a result of COVID?

PE: Well China and Russia proved that scientifically, they can cope with COVID. There are vaccines now, they are accepted and lots of countries in the global south are eagerly awaiting for Sinovac and for Sputnik. So in scientific terms it was a big victory for both as well, especially the fact that they are a traditional vaccines and they are not mRNA, they are not basically genetic modified organisms that are being sold as vaccines with no testing at all. And people who take the trouble to study the scientific aspects of it, they would rather be inoculated with the traditional vaccine then become genetic experiments. And this applies to a lot of people in Europe as well, where you have to take Pfizer, AstraZeneca et cetera, you know. And the Cuban vaccine is coming, and this could also become a major game changer, major, especially across the global south and Cuba, they have the magical know-how, the absolute top of the line medical know-how to pull that off.

So these are game changers in terms of establishing perceptions all across the world, especially across the global south, much more than the Atlanticist circles because we know how it works, the Atlanticist circles you know. The Americans control everything basically and Europe is mostly occupied territory for American interests, practically everywhere you know. But the world that really matters, I mean the bulk of the world, 80 percent of the world, 85 percent of the world, they are paying very much attention to what the Russians doing, Chinese are doing, and now what Cuba is doing.

So, this has changed a lot, and in many places where you could still have a sort of admiration for western achievements in all areas, that's not the case anymore. And the way that Asia essentially, especially east Asia, dealt with COVID-19 compared to the absolute chaos, especially in the US and most of western European countries, you know, it's something that people see every day and then they start thinking about it, and you know, it changes their world view in fact.

GR: What location do you think could be the next flashpoint triggering major changes on the world stage?

PE: Well my work for the past almost ten years is basically focused across Eurasia. So, the Russia China strategic partnership, the evolution of the BRICS, the evolution of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. I travel to Central Asia before COVID, I wanted to go back last year, I could not, but it's on my list this year, go back to Afghanistan because of this confluence between Central Asia South Asia and it's an absolute strategic area. Turkey, I need to go back to Turkey as well. Iran, which I go every two years at least, so I was always on the road. Okay, in Europe, I live in Europe as well. I live between east and west for, I don't know, 25 years at least, maybe more. And when I'm in Europe, I follow Brussels very closely because something that I used to do in the nineties, very, very closely, so if I'm in Paris I can follow, not only France, Italy, UK but also Brussels. An hour and a half by train and I am in Brussels.

And on the ground, I was everywhere from Turkey to China. Siberia is missing, Siberia was on my list as well, probably later this year, especially to check on the ground the power of Siberia, the interaction between Russian and China in their borders for instance. This is stuff that you need to see on the ground how it works for instance. The China Pakistan economic corridor if you don't go there and you see how it works on the ground, anything, anything that you say is bulls-t. So I could see how it works in the north part of Pakistan near the Chin... I went all the way to the Chinese border. The problem is I couldn't go to the south to gather report because they told me straight away, look it's a very dangerous area, we cannot allow a foreign journalist specially to go there, if anything bad happens to you, for us it is even worse.

I understand their motives right because don't forget that there is an embryonic guerilla movement in Baluchistan which is absolutely against the China Pakistan economic corridor because they are against Islamabad in the first place. So the only way to see this process of Eurasian integration is actually obviously traveling to all these places which is something that last year with COVID, we are, all of us, we are stuck. So hopefully we can come back in the next few months.

In terms of geopolitical flashpoints where major trouble could arise, there are two that are particularly, I would say, graphic: one of them is Syria. So we don't know exactly what the new configuration in the Belt Way would come up with in the terms of you know, throwing at least a spanner in the works against the Russia, Syria, Iran, Hezbollah in Syria, but that's one possibility. And the other one which day by day becomes even more worrying, Ukraine. What will they come up with in terms of weaponizing and financing Kiev to launch an offensive against Donbass? This is a work hypothesis, but it's very very plausible, even for the next few months, let's say a summer offense for instance. What we do know is that Donbass is more than prepared for it, if it happens and if it gets really, really, really hard core, there might be a swift Russian intervention and finish this thing off like they did in Georgia in 2008. They finished the whole thing in 5 days. And the Russians have the capacity to finish any stupid move by NATO for instance in Ukraine against Donbass in less than five days, so these are major flashpoints.

And of course, I would say relatively distant third would be Venezuela. If these clueless clowns in the Belt Way try to come up with some regime change operation against Venezuela, which is not totally out of the cards, don't forget that Biden-Harris already recognized 'Random' Guaidó as the president of Venezuela, which does not even qualify as a joke, right? And the official policy remains regime change. So let's say these are the three main possible flashpoints in the near future.

GR: This has been a really exciting and interesting interview. I thank you for joining me on the show.

PE: Thank you, it's a pleasure and thanks for Global Research for republishing many of my columns, that's really cool, and I know that a lot of people, many parts of the world, sometimes they read my columns first on Global Research and then at the source. This is really cool, thanks, thanks very much.

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