

## Empire of Chaos

Review of Pepe Escobar's New Book, Nimble Books, Ann Arbor, MI. 2014.

By [Jim Miles](#)

Global Research, December 19, 2014

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Oil and Energy](#),  
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*The best writers, the best recorders of historical information are those that are inside the arenas of conflict, whether it is military or economic. The likes of Robert Fisk, Franklin Lamb, Chris Hedges, Alex Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair have all entered into, witnessed, and written very strongly and effectively on many geopolitical problems that plague our era. Within the group of contemporary writers that examine the hearts of darkness and illuminate a different possible path, the writings of Pepe Escobar need to be considered as among the top echelon.*

Pepe Escobar's most recent work, *Empire of Chaos: The Roving Eye Collection*, is a compilation of many of his articles published widely on various web sites, with the "Roving Eye" portion rising from his column title with Asia Times Online. It is, as per Escobar himself, a procedure of "attempting first drafts of history." Because of that, while the observations are solid and well integrated, a few points of conjecture miss the mark – but no claim is made that his writing is infallible, and even the misses highlight the significance of some important geopolitical shifts within the "empire of chaos."

The essential features of the empire of chaos, "where a plutocracy progressively projects its own internal disintegration upon the whole world," are "a progressive drift towards not conventional war but above all economic war – manifestations of Liquid War." The purpose of that chaos is "to prevent an economic integration of Eurasia that would leave the U.S. a non-hegemon, or worse still, an outsider."

The book covers the era from early 2009 up to late 2014. The central idea being the empire of chaos and its range of activities to thwart the Eurasian integration by way of pipelines (Pipelinestan), road, rail, and cyberlinks from China through various routes to western Europe, the "New Silk Road." Along the way it touches on what are considered by the western mainstream media to be separate topics, perhaps united by an underlying violence, but nothing of a unified geopolitical attempt at preventing the loss of western (Washington) hegemony.

It is a wonderful read, occasionally repetitive due to the nature of it being a series of compiled distinct articles into a whole, sometimes humorous – generally rather dark – accounting of modern history or current events. It is sometimes whimsical when writing about a particular cultural aspect of his sojourns or when critiquing another author or activist. If history could be written/read this way, there would be far more historians in academic circles – this is not the history of the dominant media, but that of an educated roving eye capable of putting ideas and actions together into a coherent, somewhat scary whole.

Most of what is written is still current and part of today's geopolitical turmoil. Two of his

'misses' are indicative of that. Early in the work he writes, "no French or German government would even contemplate being hostage of a New Cold War between Russia and the U.S." This of course is not what is occurring at the moment as the U.S. and its western minions attempt to constrain the "New Silk Road" with economic sanctions (war by another means than diplomacy) that are having serious blowback on both France (think Mistrals and agriculture) and on Germany (think investments and energy). Of course, the final outcome of this is not yet seen or written, as blowback may yet take events where Washington does not want them to go.

Again these misses are not critical faults of analysis but more a result of being blindsided by very unexpected turns of events, with most of the unexpectedness coming from Russia's reaction to events. The second miss that highlights a possible large geopolitical shift is Russia's cancellation of the Southstream gas route through the Ukraine, and a new accord to build a major gas line through Turkey up to a transit point at the Greek border. As recently as last May, Escobar had indicated that "cancellation [by Europe] was not in the cards." That of course is technically correct, in that Russia cancelled the project, not Europe/Washington, so perhaps not a miss at all.

The whole breadth of Eurasia is Pepe Escobar's palette, with vignettes from south and east Asia, Central Asia (Turkmenistan plays a significant role for gas/oil and the New Silk Road), Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan (including the idea of Balochistan), India, obviously the north - Russia, on into all the problems of the Middle East and the violence and wars there are interconnected with attempts at oil resource control by the U.S. hegemon, and then on up to Europe and Germany in particular.

Some comments along the way highlight some ideas that do not come to light within western mainstream media. For Turkmenistan, the pipeline agreements there "virtually guarantees Russia's crucial geopolitical status as the top gas supplier to Europe and a crucial supplier to China as well." No wonder the U.S. wants to take Russia down! The locals see it as "one of the key guarantees of global security," which "is not what they [Washington] had in mind."

While discussing China, Escobar looks at the contrast of China's peaceful emergence with the U.S.' "full spectrum dominance," discusses how low interest rates (ZIRP) are "seriously impacting global asset prices and encouraging speculation," at the same time that the U.S. is attempting military encirclement versus China's independent and integrative economic policy. Ironically, China is the "banker of the current global superpower," but is in full stride towards making a "yellow BRIC Road" where "everybody else in the Global South is." The BRICs have "a common agenda...not to antagonize Washington...that, with the exception of military hegemony, is largely impotent," while the G7 countries are "reduced...to irrelevancy."

Europe on the other hand, part of the irrelevancy, "now exists primarily as a forward operating base for war around the globe." It "will be in decline as long as it remains inextricably intertwined with and continues to defer to...Washington." With Europe currently not supporting "capital making concessions" to workers and employees, "at similar crossroads in the past, you are as likely to find...outright fascism." With the EU "slouching toward irrelevance" and the U.S. in decline, Escobar concludes, "When capitalism hits the intensive care unit, the ones paying the hospital bill are always the most vulnerable - and the bill is invariably paid in blood."

Other countries attract notice. Iran is not isolated. Japan, “as long as it is occupied by Wall Street and the Pentagon, it will live in eternal recession.” Syria is “a Western proxy war, with the GCC acting as a ‘vanguard’ for NATO,” all “with exponential inbuilt blowback.” Mali’s dirty little war, supposedly again about terrorism, is once again about resources – oil, gold and uranium. Neo-naziism is supported in Ukraine, jihadists in Syria. The “Grand Chessboard” is “drenched in blood.”

The more recent articles are more centred – for obvious reasons – on Syria and the Ukraine, both seen as means of dividing Russia from Europe, and Germany in particular, while retaining/regaining control of oil/gas routes, and thus the protection of the petrodollar as global reserve currency.

Empire of Chaos is not a pleasant read in the sense that it is about the current madness and mayhem caused by the “exceptionalist” hegemony of the globally military dominant power. It does provide hope while critically examining events that have not necessarily transpired as desired by the U.S./NATO alliance. Some of the blowback to come will be of the sensationalized variety that is good for the ability of the twenty-four hour mainstream news channels to maintain the ‘fear’ factor domestically. Much of the blowback will be of the form of a gradual increase in the economic relationships of China, Russia, (all the BRICS), and the majority of the nations of the ‘global south’.

In the meantime, Empire of Chaos is an essential and entertaining if severe read that will bring you up to date on the actual impacts of U.S. geopolitical policy. From there, it is easy to follow and stay abreast of the side of the issues as seen by the majority of the world by continuing to read “The Roving Eye” as written as the first drafts of history in motion.

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