



Pepe Escobar: Russia and China Sketch the Future as the World Awaits Iran's Next Move

Description

WORLD : Enveloped in an aura of secrecy, each passing day betrays the immensity of the challenge: the possibly asymmetrical response must be, simultaneously, symbolic, substantive, cogent, convincing, reasonable and rational. That is driving Tel Aviv totally hysterical and the deciding instances of the Hegemon extremely itchy.

Everyone with a functioning brain knows this wet dream of a stunt from the point of view of hardcore Zionists and US Christian zio-cons was a serious provocation, designed to draw the US to the long-cherished Israeli plan of striking a decisive blow against both Hezbollah and Tehran.

The IDF's Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi all but gave away the game, when he said this past Sunday that "we are operating in cooperation with the USA and strategic partners in the region."

Translation: never trust the Hegemon even as the notion is floated – via Swiss mediators – that Washington won't interfere with Tehran's response to Tel Aviv. One just needs to remember Washington's "assurances" to Saddam Hussein before the first Gulf War.

It's impossible to take Hegemon back-channel assurances at face value. The White House and the Pentagon occasionally dispense these "assurances" to Moscow every time Kiev strikes deep inside the Russian Federation using US-UK satellite intel, logistics, weaponry and with NATO in de-facto operational control.

The state terror attack on Damascus, which shredded the Vienna convention on diplomatic immunity, crucially was also an attack on both the expanded BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Iran is a member of both multilateral bodies, and on top of it is engaged in strategic partnerships with both Russia and China.

So it's no wonder the leadership in both Beijing in Moscow is carefully considering all possible repercussions of the next Iranian move.

Tel Aviv's purposeful escalation – when it comes to expanding war in West Asia – happens to mirror

another escalation: NATO's no way out in Ukraine except by doubling down, with no end in sight.

That started with the invariably out of his depth Secretary of State Little Tony Blinken affirming, on the record, that Ukraine will (*italics mine*) join NATO. Which any functioning brain knows is translatable as the road map towards a Russia-NATO hot war with unbelievably dire consequences.

Little Blinkie's criminal irresponsibility was duly picked up and reverberated by the Franco-British duo, as expressed by British FM David "of Arabia" Cameron and French FM Stephane Sejourne: "If Ukraine loses, we all lose".

At least they got that (*italics mine*) right – although that took ages, when it comes to framing NATO's approaching cosmic humiliation.

"Dual Opposition" to "Dual Deterrence"

Now let's switch from clownish bit players to the adults in the room. As in Russian FM Sergei Lavrov and Chinese FM Wang Yi discussing literally every incandescent dossier together earlier this week in Beijing.

Lavrov and Wang could not be clearer on what's ahead for the Russia-China strategic partnership. They will engage together on all matters regarding Eurasian security.

They will go, in Lavrov's words, for "dual opposition" to counterpunch the West's "dual deterrence". They will be countering every attempt by the usual suspects to "slow down the natural course of history".

Add to it the confirmation that President Putin and President Xi will hold at least two bilaterals in 2024: at the SCO summit in June and at the BRICS summit in October.

In a nutshell: the dogs of Forever Wars bark while the Eurasian integration caravan marches on.

Both Lavrov and Wang made it very clear that while steering through "the natural course of history", the Russia-China strategic partnership will keep seeking a way to resolve the Ukraine tragedy, taking into account Russia's interests.

Translation: NATO better wake up and smell the coffee.

This bilateral at the FM level in Beijing is yet another graphic proof of the current tectonic shift in what the Chinese usually describe as the "world correlation of forces". Next month – already confirmed – it will be Putin's turn to visit Beijing.

It's never enough to remember that on February 4, 2022, also in Beijing, Putin personally explained to Xi why NATO/Hegemon expansion into Ukraine was totally unacceptable for Russia. Xi, for all practical purposes, understood the stakes and did not subsequently oppose the SMO.

This time, Lavrov could not but refer to the 12-point peace plan on Ukraine proposed by Beijing last year, which addresses the root causes "primarily in the context of ensuring indivisible security, including in Europe and the world over."

Your “Overcapacity” is Driving Me Nuts

Both Tehran and Moscow face a serious challenge when it comes to the Hegemon’s intentions. It’s impossible to definitely conclude that Washington was not in the loop on Tel Aviv’s attack on Iran in Damascus – even though it’s counter-intuitive to believe that the Democrats in an election year would willingly fuel a nasty hot war in West Asia provoked by Israel.

Yet there’s always the possibility that the White House-endorsed genocide in Gaza is about to extrapolate the framework of a confrontation between Israel and Iran/Axis of Resistance – as the Hegemon is de facto implicated in myriad levels.

To alleviate such tension, let’s introduce what under the circumstances can be understood as comic relief: the “Yellin’ Yellen goes to China” adventure.

US Secretary of Treasury Janet Yellen went to Beijing to essentially deliver two threats (this is the Hegemon, after all).

1. Yellen said that Chinese companies could face “significant consequences” if they provided “material support for Russia’s war on Ukraine.”

2. Yellen accused Chinese companies of “overcapacity” – especially when it comes to the electric-vehicle (EV) industry (incidentally, 18 of the top 20 EV companies around the world are Chinese).

The Chinese, predictably, dismissed the whole show with barely a yawn, pointing out that the Hegemon simply cannot deal with China’s competitive advantage, so they resort to yet another instance of “de-risking” hype.

In sum: it’s all about barely disguised protectionism. Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao went straight to the point: China’s advantage is built on innovation, not subsidies.

Others added two extra key factors: the efficiency of supply chains and ultra-dynamic market competition. EVs, in China, along with lithium batteries and solar cells, are known as the new “three major items.”

Yellin’ Yellen’s theatrics in Beijing should be easily identified as yet another desperate gambit by a former hyperpower which no longer enjoys military supremacy; no dominant MICIMATT (the military-industrial-congressional-intelligence-media-academia-think tank complex, in the brilliant formulation by Ray McGovern); no fully controlled logistics and sea lanes; no invulnerable petrodollar; no enforced, indiscriminate fear of sanctions; and most of all, not even the fear of fear itself, replaced across the Global South by rage and utter contempt for the imperial support for the genocide in Gaza.

Just a Tawdry Greek Tragedy Remix

Once again it’s up to the inestimable Michael Hudson to succinctly nail it all down:

“The official US position recognizes that it can’t be an industrial exporter anymore, though how is it going to balance the international payments to support the dollar’s exchange rate?”

The solution is rent-seeking. That's why the United States says, well, what's the main new rent-seeking opportunity in world trade? Well, it's information technology and computer technology.

That's why the United States is fighting China so much, and why President Biden has said again and again that China is the number one enemy. It moved first against Huawei for the 5G communications, and now it's trying to get Europe and American and Taiwanese exporters not to export a computer chip to China, not for the Dutch to export chip-engraving machinery to China.

There's a belief that somehow the United States, if it can prevent other countries from producing high-technology intellectual property rents, then other countries will be dependent.

Rent-seeking really means dependency of other countries if they don't have a choice to pay you much more money than the actual cost of production. That's rent, the price over value.

Well, the United States, since it can't compete on value because of the high cost of living and labor here, it can only monopolize rent.

Well, China has not been deterred. China has leapfrogged over the United States and is producing its own etching machinery, its own computer chips. The question is, what is the rest of the world going to do?

Well, the rest of the world means, on the one hand, the global majority, Eurasia, the BRICS+, and on the other hand, Western Europe. Western Europe is right in the middle of all this.

Is it really going to forego the much less expensive Chinese exports at cost, including normal profit, or is it going to let itself be locked into American rent-extraction technology, not only for computer chips but for military arms?"

Graphically, this eventful week provided yet another howler: Xi officially received Lavrov when Yellen' Yellen was still in Beijing. Chinese scholars note how Beijing's position in a convoluted triad is admirably flexible, compared to the vicious deadlock of US-Russia relations.

No one knows how the deadlock may be broken. What is clear is that the Russia-China leadership, as well as Iran's, know full well the dangers roaming the chessboard when the usual suspects seem to go all out gambling everything, even knowing that they are outgunned; outproduced; outnumbered; and outwitted.

It's a tawdry Greek tragedy remix, alright, yet without the pathos and grandeur of Sophocles, featuring just a bunch of nasty, brutish specimens plunging into their unblinking, self-inflicted doom.

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Date Created

04/14/2024