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By Frank , 17 May 2026

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By Frank Dumon



> As an old man who once had the privilege of walking the rice paddies of Vietnam and the bustling streets of Bangkok, I have learned to recognize the difference between power that builds and power that destroys. One is a quiet, patient river; the other is a noisy, temporary storm. This past week, from my study far from the action, I watched that storm—the one called the United States Empire—crash against the ancient walls of Asian civilisation.

The transcript of the conversation between Danny Haiphong and the incomparable Pepe Escobar, recorded live from the future capital of the world, Shanghai, confirms what many of us have long feared yet also quietly hoped: the so-called "WW3 strategy" of the American deep state has not just been challenged. It has been wiped out. Wiped out not by a missile, but by a masterclass in strategic patience, cultural depth, and the quiet fury of a Global South that refuses to kneel any longer.

Two Capitals, One Message: “We Are the Future”

Let us begin with geography, because the empire always forgets geography. Escobar, our guide through this multipolar labyrinth, reminds us that there are two capitals of Asia today. The first is Bangkok—the soul of soft power, service, and astronomy. But the second, the beating heart of the industrial-technological future, is Shanghai.

Walking the rejuvenated banks of the Huangpu River, one feels it: the future is not an American suburb. It is a high-speed train from Beijing to Vientiane. (I was there in February) It is a tri-fold Huawei phone that leaves Silicon Valley stuttering. While Washington obsesses over which oil pipeline to bomb next, Shanghai is discussing the implementation of the 5-year plan: how to reorganise artificial intelligence, how to retrain millions of workers displaced by automation, how to keep social cohesion in a society moving faster than any in human history.



The message from Beijing to Donald Trump—dressed up in silk and state dinners at the Temple of Heaven—was as brutal as it was elegant. President Xi offered the American delegation a single phrase: constructive strategic stability. For those of us who remember the Cold War, this sounds reasonable. For the American empire, it is an impossibility. The United States is not “constructive”; it is extractive. It is not “strategic”; it is chaotic, driven by the 3 a.m. tweets of a real estate mogul. And it is certainly not about “stability”; it runs on the fuel of permanent chaos, lies, and regime change.

> The Chinese didn’t just host Trump. They absorbed him. They let the “Emperor of Barbaria,” surrounded by his $10 trillion caravan of CEOs, walk through the Forbidden City while reminding him, politely, that those trees are 400 years old. As old as his nation. The cultural humiliation was total. And the Americans—Larry Fink, Musk, the entourage—did not even notice. They did not network. They did not use translators. They sat at the state dinner like provincial hicks, unable to speak to the Chinese elites at their own tables. This is not diplomacy. This is the behaviour of a declining hegemon that has forgotten how to listen.



The BRICS Disaster and the Rise of the Sane

> But let us not be naive. The path to a multipolar world is not a straight line. Escobar pulls no punches about the BRICS Foreign Ministers' meeting in New Delhi. It was, in his words, a "major disaster." And why? Because the empire fights back not only with aircraft carriers but with proxies inside the very institutions of the Global South.

We saw the dubious games of Prime Minister Modi. We saw the UAE, a full BRICS member, acting as a Trojan horse for the Zionist-Hindu-Wahhabi triangle that Escobar rightly identifies as toxic. The tension between the Iranian and Emirati foreign ministers was so thick it almost came to blows. And where was the leadership? It was Sergey Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, somber and realistic, stating the obvious: the United States is non-agreement capable. You cannot make a deal with a power that lies as easily as it breathes.

And yet, from the rubble of that chaotic Delhi summit, a new architecture is emerging. Look at the four Sunni powers. Egypt (in BRICS), Pakistan (knocking on the door), Saudi Arabia (hedging its bets), and Turkey (with Erdogan, trusted by nobody but too powerful to ignore). They are coalescing not because they love Iran, but because they see the future. The port of Gwadar is now functioning as an Iranian port. The Chinese tankers are already docking at Chabahar. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is turning the map of Western Asia into a web of interdependence that no bunker-buster bomb can untangle.

This is the real story. While the US plans to turn the Strait of Hormuz into a toll booth for its collapsing dollar, China and Russia are simply going around it. They are building overland corridors. They are electrifying North Korea, for God's sake. Imagine that: Pepe Escobar confirms that Russia and China are coordinating to bring high-speed rail and Chinese EVs to the streets of Pyongyang. The border between North Korea and China will soon look like the border between Switzerland and Italy. That is the victory of development over destruction.

The Kagan Conundrum and the Endless War Party

> Back in Washington, the rats are scurrying. Danny Haiphong brings up the fascinating case of Robert Kagan—the neocon's neocon, married to Victoria Nuland, the woman who literally handed out cookies during the Maidan coup. Kagan is now writing in The Atlantic about American defeat. He sees the checkmate. He knows that the project for a "New American Century" has collapsed with the speed of a burning helicopter.

But do not mistake their panic for surrender. As Escobar warns, these people do not do contrition. They are killers. They are reformulating their plans for the forever war against Islam, against Russia, against China. The recent bombing of a so-called ISIS leader in Nigeria was theatre. The leaks about bombing Iran's nuclear facilities are the death rattles of a military industrial complex that has run out of easy targets.

> Yet, the landscape has changed. Leon Panetta, a man who represents the old CIA guard, admits that Iran has a "gun to America's head" in the Strait of Hormuz. The difference is that now, China and Russia are holding the bulletproof vest. When Putin met with Iranian diplomat Araghchi in St. Petersburg, he used two specific words. Not "war." Not "compromise." But **Sovereignty and Independence**.

That is the language of the Global South. It is the language I heard in the villages of Laos, where peasants would smile and offer tea despite the cluster bombs left by the US Secret War. They know sovereignty. They bleed it.

A European Elder's Plea

> So where does this leave us, here in the tired, decaying West? I write this on https://jakobijn.be/en because we have a duty to remember history. My generation watched the United States destroy Vietnam, then Iraq, then Libya, then Afghanistan. We watched the responsibility to protect become a license to pillage. Now, the centre of gravity has shifted. It is not in Brussels. It is not in Washington. It is in Shanghai and Bangkok. The Chinese are not asking for permission. They are offering the US a chance to roll back its self-destructive policies. They are offering a structural reset. Trump will not take it. Harris would not take it. No American leader can, because the empire cannot survive peace.

But we, the concerned elders of Europe, we must look east without fear. We must understand that the Chinese five-year plan is not a threat; it is a mirror showing us our own decay. The Americans sent a delegation of hubris and arrogance to Beijing.

They came back with nothing but photos in front of the Temple of Heaven.

Meanwhile, Putin is landing in Beijing for a visit tomorrow. The coordination between Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran is tighter than any NATO alliance could ever dream of. North Korea looks forward to a bright future of electric buses and rail links. Pakistan is mediating the future of the Middle East. The “Trump in panic” headline is real. But the panic is not because he lost a trade deal. The panic is because he—and the entire Western ruling class—has just realised that the rest of the world has moved on.

They are building. We are bombing.

> It is time for Europe to wake up. Or like the empire before us, we will be left standing outside the temple, barbarians in the rain, wondering where it all went wrong. This article is dedicated to the people of Shanghai, Hanoi and Bangkok, who taught me that dignity is not a weapon; it is a home. “The future is not a loudspeaker. It is a conversation.”

https://youtu.be/r92MVUELjeA