

# EUROPE IS A NASTY PLACE

Pepe Escobar



**PEPE ESCOBAR** — a Brazilian left-wing journalist and political scientist, analyst, and observer at the independent American information agency *The Real News* (founded by Gore Vidal and Naomi Klein). He authored the book 'Globalization: How the Globalized World is Dissolving into Liquid War' (2007)

■ *Who and what are reactionary forces in the present-day world?*

**There are three major reactionary forces today.** The first one is the small, transnational elites of liquid modernity associated with financial turbo-capitalism, which is essentially speculation and plunder on a global scale. The second is the US Pentagon, whose global agenda is Full Spectrum Dominance, that is, the militarization of everything including space and outer space. The third group is the House of Saud, the world's largest oil producer, and 'leader' of the counter-revolution which aims to destroy the gains of the 2011 Arab Revolt. As it stands, these reactionary forces are winning or at least advancing on all fronts.

The new reactionary wave in Europe is already on - not only

when we look at the programs carried out by the governments in power (France, Italy, Britain, Germany) but in the overall approach of an aging population fearful of everything — with structural unemployment, a 'Muslim invasion,' and Russia's control of Europe's energy sources. **Fortress Europe is an extremely nasty place to live for most young, progressive Europeans.**

In the US, the reactionary wave may become even more violent with the acceleration of the relative decline of the American Empire, and the related, widespread financial and moral bankruptcy and absolute impoverishment of the middle class — the death knell of the American Dream.

■ *What is the reason why reactionary politics is so successful? Is it due to the extremes of the progressive agenda, of the chosen direction for development?*

The wave of reactionary 'wins' was never caused by the excesses of progressives, but by articulated counter-revolutionary offensives. **As we stand, everything should be reconsidered — in the sense of a new global social contract only being possible if this late stage of capitalism is surpassed.** This process would have to be all-inclusive, with every nation allowed a seat on the table in the context of a new global governance mechanism.

**I don't see any possibility of this happening in the future** — especially with the Atlantic West's growing paranoia and fear of strong competitors China and Russia; the current energy wars; the upcoming water wars; and the unstoppable degradation of the environment.

■ *Can the fight against human rights and a universal practice of international intervention, in Libya*

*for example, be called progressive or reactionary?*

It depends on how we define 'global governance.' To leave it in the hands of only the G-20, for instance, may be better than the G-8, but that still doesn't make it global. An absolute reform of global institutions — from the IMF and World Bank to the UN Security Council — has never been more essential, but entrenched elites resist it in the Atlantic West.

**International interventionism as in Libya is absolutely regressive** — as regressive as practiced by liberal hawks as it was by US neo-cons. The UN was instrumentalized by three Security Council members — US, Britain, and France — and so NATO could have been appropriated as the organization's militarized arm to intervene and take sides in a civil war in a Muslim country.

■ *What is a progressive agenda in the context of the 21st century? What are the core points of the agenda, and the main struggle of the progressive and reactionary forces?*

**The progressive agenda for the 21st century should be to minimize the ravages of financial turbo-capitalism, and that includes serious environmental concerns.** Productive capitalism — as in China — has at least lifted hundreds of millions of people from poverty and given them a reasonably decent standard of living; that is a phenomenal historic accomplishment.

Financial, speculative turbo-capitalism for its part has only enriched a small minority and devastated the middle class across the developed West and in pockets of affluence in the developing world. It was largely the social inequality provoked by speculative capital that led to the current revolts in the Arab world. ■

*Yulia Netesova exclusively for the Yaroslavl Forum*