

# Masters of Defeat: Retreating Empire and Bellicose Bluster

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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“Washington is forced to watch other powers shape events”  
(Financial Times August 25, 2008)

## Introduction

Everywhere one looks, US imperial policy has suffered major military and diplomatic defeats. With the backing of the Democratic Congress, the Republican White House’s aggressive pursuit of a military approach to empire-building has led to a world-wide decline of US influence, the realignment of former client rulers toward imperial adversaries, the emergence of competing hegemonies and loss of crucial sources of strategic raw materials. The defeats and losses have not dampened militaristic policies nor extinguished the drive for empire building. On the contrary, both the White House and the Congressional incumbents have embraced a hardening of military positions, reiterated a confrontational style of politics and an increased reliance on overseas, bellicose posturing to distract the domestic populace from its deteriorating economic conditions. As the economic and political cost of sustaining the empire increases, as the Federal government allocates hundreds of billions to the crises-ridden financial sector and cuts tens of billions in corporate taxes, avoiding collapse and recession, the entire economic burden is borne by the wage and salaried class in the form of declining living standards, while 12 million immigrant workers are subject to savage police state repression.

The overseas failures and domestic crises however have not led to progressive alternatives; the beneficiaries are overseas competitors and the domestic elite. In large part where public opinion majorities have expressed a desire or clamored for progressive alternatives, they have been thwarted by political representatives linked to militarist ideologues and the corporate elites.

Paradoxically the defeats and decline of US military directed empire building has been accompanied by the retreat of the anti-war movements in North America and Western Europe and the sharp decline of political parties and regimes opposing US imperialism in all the advanced capitalist countries. In other words, the defeats suffered by the US Empire have not been products of the Western Left, nor have they led to a ‘peace dividend’ or improved living standards for the working classes or peasants. To the extent that there are beneficiaries, they are found largely among the newly aspiring economic imperial countries, like China , Russia and India , among the oil rich countries of the Middle East, and especially among a broad swath of large agro-mineral export countries like Brazil , South Africa and Iran , which have carved out important niches in their region’s.

The growth and overseas expansion of the new economic empire building countries and their agro-mineral-financial ruling classes (with the possible exception of Venezuela ) have greatly benefited a tiny elite, comprising not more than twenty percent of the population. The relative decline of US military imperialism and the rise of new economic imperialist powers have redistributed wealth and market share between countries but not among classes within the ascendant powers. While the militarists-Zionists-financial speculators rule the US Empire, the new billionaire manufacturers, real estate speculators and agro-mineral exporters rule the emerging economic empires.

The second paradox is found in the fact that the political forces militarily defeating the US military-centered empire are not the forces benefiting from the struggle.

While the Iraqi and Afghan resistance has imposed almost a trillion dollar cost on the US Treasury and tied down over 2 million rotating US troops over the past six years, it is the Chinese, Indian, Russian, European, Gulf Oil and financial ruling classes which have reaped the benefits from massive US non-productive expenditures. While the new economic beneficiaries are, in large part, secular, imperial and elitist, the politico-military forces undermining and defeating the US military empire are religious (Islamic), nationalist and mass-based.

The contemporary defeats of US military empire building are not a product of Western, secular, mass leftist movements. Nor do they result in a progressive, egalitarian society. Instead we have fast-growing highly unequal economies, led by ruling classes promoting their own 'national' versions of free market/neo-liberal strategies, which maximize profits through economic exploitation of labor, resource extraction and pillage of the environment. Until the mass movements, intellectuals and activists of the West break from their passivity and blind allegiance to the existing major parties, the defeat of US militarism will be a costly burden assumed by the masses of the Third World while the benefits will accrue to the rising new billionaire economic imperialists.

### **The Geography of Imperial Failures and Retreat Middle East: Iraq and Iran**

The ascendancy of military-directed empire building in the US has once again put into evidence its utter incapability to impose a new imperial order. After six and a half years of war and occupation in Iraq , the US has suffered enormous military casualties and over half a trillion in economic losses, without securing any political or military or natural resource gains. The losses from the war have generated domestic opposition to US military intervention, undermining current and future imperial military capacity. Even the US designated puppet ruler in Iraq , Al Maliki, has demanded a set date for US withdrawal. US client Afghan President Karzai has called for greater oversight over US military operations which have killed thousands of non-combatants and civilians, thus deepening and extending support for the national resistance which now operates throughout the country.

For those in the US, particularly on the 'Left' who mistakenly argued that the invasion of Iraq was a 'War for Oil' (rather than a war in support of Israeli hegemonic ambitions), Iraq's signing of a \$3 billion dollar oil contract with the China National Petroleum Corporation in late August 2008 (Financial Times August 28, 2008) demonstrates the contrary, unless one wishes to revise the slogan to 'US War for Chinese Oil'. In the 6 years since the US invaded Iraq , US oil companies have still failed to secure major oil deals.

On October 4-5, 2008, Shell, one of the world's biggest petroleum multinationals and OMV,

an Austrian energy corporation will sponsor a conference in Teheran under the auspices of the National Iranian Gas Export Company to promote 'gas export opportunities and potentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran'. This conference is simply one more example of the role of major petroleum companies attempting, through peaceful means, to build their overseas holdings ('economic empire'). The major opposition to this 'oil for peace' move on the part of Shell Oil came from the leading Jewish-Zionist promoter of US engaging in Middle East wars for Israel - the Anti-Defamation League, which criticized Big Oil. According to its two principle leaders, Glen Lewy and Abe Foxman, "...these two companies are co-sponsoring a conference with the state-owned energy company of the leading state-sponsor of terrorism and human rights violator. By promoting one of Iran 's strategic industries, natural gas, OMV and Shell are hindering the effort of responsible states (sic) and corporations to isolate Iran ."

The conflict between Shell/OMV and a leading American Zionist-Jewish organization highlights the fundamental conflict between economic-centered empire building and military-centered empire building. The fact that Shell and OMV went ahead with the Iranian conference shows that at least some sectors of the oil industry are finally beginning to challenge the stranglehold that Zionist-militarists have over US Middle East policy. After having lost tens of billions of dollars in lucrative oil contracts thanks to Zionist-dictated policies , the oil companies are finally taking the first tentative steps toward formulating a new policy.

By pursuing the Israeli-US Zionist agenda of sequential wars and sanctions against oil-rich Muslim countries, Washington has lost access, control and profits to global economic competitors in a strategic region.

## **Africa**

In the African nation of Somalia Washington opted for military intervention via the proxy Ethiopian dictatorial regime of Meles Zenawi to bolster the discredited and defeated pro-US puppet regime of Abdullah Yusuf. After almost 2 years the Ethiopian and the puppet regime only control a few blocks of the capital, Mogadishu , while the rest of the country is in the hands of the Somali resistance. According to the Financial Times (August 28, 2008), the Ethiopian regime "expressed a desire to curtail its military engagement in Somalia ". The US surrogate has been militarily and politically defeated; the US failed to secure support for its proxy occupation from the African Union. Throughout Africa, China, the EU, Japan, Russia and to a lesser degree India and Brazil all have made inroads in securing joint ventures in oil, raw materials export markets and large-scale, long-term infrastructure investments, while the US backs armed separatists in the Sudan and subsidizes the corrupt Mubarak regime in Egypt for over a billion dollars a year. Not only has the US empire lost out economically to its global competitors, it has suffered a major military-diplomatic defeat in Somalia and severely politically and financially weakened its Ethiopian client.

## **South Asia**

In South Asia, the US strategic puppet ruler, Pakistani dictator Mushareff has been forced to resign - and the weak and divided electoral coalition which has replaced him has not been able to match the military, diplomatic and intelligence support for the US war in Afghanistan which Mushareff provided. The Pakistan-Afghan border is virtually open territory for cross border attacks, recruitment and military supplies by Afghan resistance organizations. The

empire's loss of Mushareff further undermines US efforts to impose an outpost in Afghanistan .

Through frequent ground and air attacks on Pakistan regions bordering Afghanistan, the US-NATO 'coalition' has multiplied, deepened and made massive civilian political and armed opposition throughout the country. The 'election' of the US client and convicted warlord and thug, Asif Ali Zadari, as President of Pakistan, will not in anyway contribute to the recovery of US influence outside of very limited elite political and military circles. Washington 's pursuit and extension of military imperialism from Afghanistan to Pakistan has led to even more severe political defeat among a much wider population in South Asia .

Top NATO generals and officials have recognized that the 'Taliban' has reorganized and extended its influence throughout the country, controlling most

throughways to the major cities and even operating in and around the capital Kabul . Repeated US bombing and missile strikes of civilian housing, cultural events and markets have alienated vast numbers of Afghans and led to widespread opposition to US client ruler Karzai. The promises of both US presidential candidates to vastly expand the US occupation forces in Afghanistan upon taking office, will only prolong the war and deepen the weakening of the economic empires and its domestic foundations.

## **Caucasus**

Washington 's attempt to extend its sphere of influence in the Caucasus through a territorial grab by its authoritarian Georgian client, President Mikheil Saakashvili, led instead to a profound defeat of the local satrap's regional ambitions. The political break and integration with Russia of South Ossetia and Abkhazia represents the end of unrestricted expansion of the US and EU in the region - and a rollback in contested terrain. The rash adventurism and subsequent destruction of the Georgian economy by Saakashvili has provoked widespread internal unrest. Worse still, Georgia, the US and its Eastern European clients call for 'sanctions' against Russia, threatens to undermine Western European strategic energy supply lines, as well as end Moscow's collaboration with US military policies in Afghanistan, Iran and the Middle East. If Washington escalates its military and economic threats to Russia , the latter can provide Iran , Syria and other US adversaries with powerful middle range ultra-modern anti-aircraft missiles. Equally important Russia can dump over \$200 billion in US Treasury notes, further weaken the US dollar and set in motion a global run in the currency.

In Georgia as elsewhere, US military-centered empire building gives priority to a failed marginal land grab by a third rate client over lucrative strategic economic and military relations with one of the world's global oil and gas powers and a crucial collaborator in its ongoing military operation in the Middle East. While US economic relations with Russia crumble in the wake of its aggressive military encirclement of Moscow—military bases in the Czech Republic, Poland, Georgia, Bulgaria, Rumania - Western European empire builders resist making military threats in favor of harsh rhetoric and 'dialog' in order to sustain strategic energy ties.

Middle East: Israel and the Arabs In the Middle East, the US unconditional backing of Israeli military aggression in Lebanon , Palestine and Syria , and US backing of weak and ineffective Arab clients has led to a sharp decline in US influence. In Lebanon , since the defeat of the Israeli invasion in 2006, Hezbollah literally rules the southern half of the

country - and holds veto power within the national government, reversing US client rule.

In Gaza , US and Israeli military attempts to seize power and oust Hamas via its client Abbas and Dahlen were rounded defeated and the independent nationalist movement led by Hamas consolidated power.

Washington's effort to regain its influence and improve its image among conservative and moderate Arab rulers by 'mediating' a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine in Annapolis in November 2007 was utterly destroyed by Tel Aviv's open and total repudiation of all the basic conditions set forth by the Bush Administration. Washington has no influence on Israel 's colonial expansion. On the contrary, the US Middle East policy is totally subject to the Israeli state through the Zionist Power Configuration and its control over Congress, Presidential selection, the mass media and major propaganda 'think tanks'. The Zionists demonstrated their power by even dictating who could or could not even speak at the Democratic National Convention with the unprecedented censoring of former President James Carter because of his humanitarian criticism of Israel 's policies toward the Palestinians. Zionist-Israeli usurpation of US Middle East policy has led to strategic losses of investments, markets, profits and partnerships for the entire multi-national oil and gas industry.

The political fusion of imperialist militarists confronting Russia at the cost of strategic economic relations and Zionist-militarists pursuing Israeli regional power has led to multiple failed military adventures and tremendous global economic losses.

### The Western Hemisphere

The application of the militarist strategy as well as the relative decline of economic hegemony has led to strategic defeats and failures in the Western Hemisphere. In late 2001, Washington challenged and threatened to take reprisals against President Chavez for refusing to submit to Bush's 'war on terror.' Chavez at the time informed a bellicose representative of the State Department (Grossman) that, "We don't fight terror with terror." Less than 6 months later in April 2003, Washington backed a failed military coup and between December 2002 to February 2003, a failed bosses lockout. The failure of the US militarist strategy devastated Washington 's military and ruling class clients, and radicalized the Chavez Government. As a consequence, the Venezuelan leader proceeded to nationalize oil and petrol sectors and develop strategic ties with countries that compete with or oppose the US Empire, such as, Cuba , Iran , China and Russia . Venezuela signed strategic economic agreements in Latin America with Argentina , Bolivia , Ecuador , Cuba and Nicaragua . While Washington poured over \$6 billion dollars in military aid to Colombia , Venezuela signed petrol and gas investment and trade agreements with most of the Central American and Caribbean countries, severely challenging Washington 's influence in the region.

High commodity prices, booming Asian markets, unacceptable US tariffs and subsidies led to the relative independence of Latin America's 'national capitalist' regimes, who embraced 'neo-liberalism' without the constraints of the IMF or the dictates of Washington. In these circumstances the US lost most of its leverage - except Colombia 's military threats - to pressure Latin America to isolate Chavez - or even Cuba . Washington 's military strategy led to its self-isolation.

### **Overseas Consequences of Failed Military Strategies**

Isolation in Latin American can not be overcome because Washington's pursuit of empire via prolonged military aggression - in the rest of the world and in Latin America - can not compete with the profits, wealth, investment and trade opportunities offered to the ruling classes of Latin America by the new markets in Russia, the Middle East, Asia and by oil rich Venezuela.

Washington's militarist imperial strategy is evident in its dual policies: Prioritizing the spending of \$6 billion in military aid to repressive Colombia while sacrificing \$10 billion in trade, investments and profits with oil rich Venezuela. Washington has spent over \$500 billion in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; billions are spent in war preparations against Iran; over \$3 billion annually for Israel's military; all the time losing hundreds of billions of dollars in trade and investment with Latin America.

The most striking aspect of this historical contrast is that the military spending embedded in military-centered empire building has failed even its minimum goal of gaining political control, military outposts and strategic resources for war. In contrast, global market competitors have secured access and control over strategic economic resources, and signed lucrative political co-operation agreements without costly military commitments.

#### Domestic Consequences of Failed Military-Driven Empire Building

The cost of military-Zionist driven empire building to the domestic economy has been devastating: Competitiveness has declined, inflation is eroding living standards, employment with stable living wages is disappearing, unemployment and loss of jobs is skyrocketing, the financial system is disconnected from the real economy and on the verge of collapse, home foreclosures are reaching catastrophic levels and taxpayers are being bled to death to bail out the trillion dollar home mortgage debt speculators. Political malaise is widespread. In the midst of system-wide crisis, an emerging police state has taken hold: thousands of legal and undocumented immigrant workers have been seized at their factories and detained in military camps away from their children. Muslim and Arab associations are raided and prosecuted on the bases of paid informers, including hooded Israeli 'witnesses'. The federal and local police practice 'preventative detention' of activists and journalists prior to the Presidential conventions, seizing protestors before they can exercise their constitutional rights and systematically destroying the cameras and tapes of citizens attempting to document abuses. Failed military imperialism brings in its wake a burgeoning police state - backed by both political parties - in the face of economic crises which threatens the political and social foundations of the empire.

#### Conclusion

The economic crisis in the run up to the Presidential elections has not led to the emergence of a mass based progressive alternative candidate. Both the Democratic and Republican contenders promise to prolong and extend the imperial wars and submit to unprecedented Israeli-Zionist military dictates with regard to Iran.

Crises and military defeats have not led to a re-thinking of global economic and military commitments. Instead we witness a right-wing radicalization, which seeks to escalate confrontations with China, Russia and Iran. The US draws in its wake the client regimes of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and Baltic regions to counter Western Europe's emphasis on 'economic-centered' empire building.

The reality of a multi-polarized economic world however undermines US efforts to impose a bipolar military confrontation. China holds \$1.2 trillion dollars in US debt. Western Europe, in general, depends on over one-third of its energy for its homes, offices and factories from Russia . Germany relies on Russia for almost 60% of its gas. The economies of Asia: Japan , India , China , Vietnam and South Korea all depend on oil from the Middle East and not on the Middle East war plans of the Israeli-American militarists.

Brazil , Russia , India , China , South Africa , Venezuela and Iran are essential to the functioning of the world economy. In the same way that the US-Israel-United Kingdom cannot support their empire on the bases of failed military strategies abroad and economic disaster and police state policies at home.

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