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America's Advancing Empire: Putsch, Pillage and Duplicity

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The Obama regime, in coordination with its allies and proxies, has re-launched a virulent world-wide campaign to destroy independent governments, encircle and ultimately, undermine global competitors, and establish a new US – EU centered world order.

We will proceed by identifying the recent 'cycles' of US empire-building; the advances and retreats; the methods and strategies; the results and perspectives. Our main focus is on the imperial dynamics driving the US toward greater military confrontations, up to and including conditions which can lead to a world war.

Recent Imperial Cycles

US empire-building has not been a linear process. The recent decades provide ample evidence of contradictory experiences. Summarily we can identify several phases in which empire-building has experienced broad advances and sharp setbacks – with certain caveats. We are looking at global processes, in which there are also limited counter-tendencies: In the midst of large-scale imperial advances, particular regions, countries or movements successfully resisted or even reversed the imperial thrust. Secondly, the cyclical nature of empire-building in no way puts in doubt the imperial character of the state and economy and its relentless drive to dominate, exploit and accumulate. Thirdly, the methods and strategy directing each imperial advance differ according to changes among targeted countries.

Over the past thirty years we can identify three phases in empire-building.

Imperial Advance 1980's to 2000

In the period roughly from the mid-1980's to the year 2000, empire-building expanded on a global scale.

(A). Imperial Expansion in the former Communist regions

The US and EU penetrated and hegemonized Eastern Europe; disintegrated and pillaged Russia and the USSR; privatized and denationalized hundreds of billions of dollars worth of public enterprises, mass media outlets and banks; incorporated military bases throughout Eastern Europe into NATO and established satellite regimes as willing accomplices in imperial conquests in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

(B). Imperial Expansion in Latin America

Beginning from the early 1980's to the end of the century, empire-building advanced throughout Latin America under the formula of "free markets and free elections".

From Mexico to Argentina, empire-centered, neo-liberal regimes privatized and denationalized over 5,000 public enterprises and banks, benefiting US and European multi-nationals. Political leaders lined up with the US in international forums. Latin American generals responded favorably to US-centered military operations. Bankers extracted billions in debt payments and laundered many billions more in illicit money. The US-centered, continent-wide "North American Free Trade Agreement" appeared to advance according to schedule.

(C).Imperial Advances in Asia and Africa

Communist and nationalist regimes shed their leftist and anti-imperialist policies and opened their societies and economies to capitalist penetration. In Africa, two key "leftist" countries, Angola and post-apartheid South Africa adopted "free market policies".

In Asia, China and Indo-China moved decisively toward capitalist development strategies; foreign investment, privatizations and intense exploitation of labor replaced collectivist egalitarianism and anti-imperialism. India, and other state-directed capitalist countries, like South Korea, Taiwan and Japan, liberalized their economies. Imperial advances were accompanied by greater economic volatility, a sharpening of the class struggle and an opening of the electoral process to accommodate competing capitalist factions.

Empire-building expanded under the slogan of "free markets and fair elections" – markets dominated by giant multi-nationals and elections, which assured elite successes.

Imperial Retreat and Reverses: 2000-2008

The brutal costs of the advance of empire led to a global counter-tendency, a wave of anti-neoliberal uprisings and military resistance to US invasions. Between 2000 – 2008 empire-building was under siege and in retreat.

Russia and China Challenge the Empire

US empire-building ceased to expand and conquer in two strategic regions: Russia and Asia. Under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin, the Russian state was reconstructed; pillage and disintegration was reversed. The economy was harnessed to domestic development. The military was integrated into a system of national defense and security. Russia once again became a major player in regional and international politics.

China's turn toward capitalism was accompanied by a dynamic state presence and a direct role in promoting double digit growth for two decades: China becoming the second largest economy in the world, displacing the US as the major trading partner in Asia and Latin America. The US economic empire was in retreat.

Latin America: The End of the Neo-Liberal Empire

Neo-liberalism and US-centered 'integration' led to pillage, economic crises and major popular upheavals, leading to the ascendancy of new center-left and left regimes. 'Post neo-liberal' administrations emerged in Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Central America and Uruguay. US empire-builders suffered several strategic defeats.

The US effort to secure a continent-wide free trade agreement fell apart and was replaced by regional integration organizations that excluded the US and Canada. In its place, Washington signed bi-lateral agreements with Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Panama and Peru.

Latin America diversified its markets in Asia and Europe: China replaced the US as its main trading partner. Extractive development strategies and high commodity prices financed greater social spending and political independence.

Selective nationalizations, increased state regulation and debt renegotiations weakened US leverage over the Latin American economies. Venezuela, under President Hugo Chavez successfully challenged US hegemony in the Caribbean via regional organizations. Caribbean economies achieved greater independence and economic viability through membership in PETROCARIBE, a program through which they received petrol from Venezuela at subsidized prices. Central American and Andean countries increased security and trade via the regional organization, ALBA. Venezuela provided an alternative development model to the US-centered neo-liberal approach, in which earnings from the extractive economy financed large-scale social programs.

From the end of the Clinton Administration to the end of the Bush Administration, the economic empire was in retreat. The empire lost Asian and Latin American markets to China. Latin America gained greater political independence. The Middle East became 'contested terrain'. A

revised and stronger Russian state opposed further encroachments on its borders. Military resistance and defeats in Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq and Lebanon challenged US dominance.

Imperial Offensive: Obama's Advances the Empire

The entire period of the Obama regime has been taken up with reversing the retreat of empire-building. To that end Obama has developed a primarily military strategy (1) confrontation and encircling China and Russia, (2) undermining and overthrowing independent governments in Latin America and re-imposing neo-liberal client regimes, and (3) launching covert and overt military assaults on independent regimes everywhere.

The empire-building offensive of the 21st century differs from that of the previous decade in several crucial ways: Neo-liberal economic doctrines are discredited and electorates are not so easily convinced of the beneficence of falling under US hegemony. In other words, empire-builders cannot rely on diplomacy, elections and free market propaganda to expand their imperial reach as they did in the 1990's.

To reverse the retreat and advance 21st century empire-building, Washington realized it had to rely on force and violence. The Obama regime allocated billions of dollars to finance arms for mercenaries, salaries for street fighters and campaign expenses for electoral clients engaged in destabilization campaigns. Diplomatic duplicity and broken agreements replaced negotiated settlements – on a grand scale.

Throughout the Obama period not a single imperial advance was secured via elections, diplomatic agreements or political negotiations. The Obama Presidency sought and secured the massification of global spy network (NSA) and the almost daily murder of political adversaries via drones and other means. Covert killer operations under the US Special Forces expanded throughout the world. Obama assumed dictatorial prerogatives, including the power to order the arbitrary assassination of U.S. citizens.

The unfolding of the Obama regime's global effort to stem the imperial retreat and re-launch empire-building "pivoted" almost exclusively on military instruments: armed proxies, aerial assaults, coups and violent putschist power grabs. Thugs, mobs, Islamist terrorists, Zionist militarists and a medley of retrograde separatist assassins were the tools of imperial advance. The choice of imperial proxies varied according to time and political circumstances.

Confronting and Degrading China: Military Encirclement and Economic Exclusion

Faced with the loss of markets and the challenges of China as a global competitor, Washington developed two major lines of attack: 1. An economic strategy designed to deepen the integration of Asian and Latin America countries in a free trade pact that excludes China (the Trans Pacific Trade Agreement); and 2. Pentagon-designed military plan Air-Sea Battle, which targets China's mainland with a full-scale air and missile assault if Washington's current strategy of controlling China's commercial maritime lifeline fails (FT, 2/10/14). While an offensive military strategy is still on the Pentagon's drawing board, the Obama regime is building up its maritime armada a few short miles off China's coast, expanding its military bases in the

Philippines, Australia and Japan and tightening the noose around China's strategic maritime routes for vital imports like oil, gas and raw materials.

The US is actively promoting an Indo-Japanese military alliance as part of its strategy of military encirclement of China. Joint military maneuvers, high-level military coordination and meetings between Japanese and Indian military officials are seen by the Pentagon as strategic advances in isolating China and reinforcing the US stranglehold on China's maritime routes to the Middle East, Southeast Asia and beyond. India, according to one of India's leading weeklies, is viewed "as a junior partner of the US. The Indian Navy is fast becoming the chief policeman of the Indian Ocean and the Indian military's dependence on the U.S. military-industrial complex is increasing..." (Economic and Political Weekly (Mumbai), 2/15/14, p. 9. The US is also escalating its support for violent separatist movements in China, namely the Tibetans, Uighurs and other Islamists. Obama's meeting with the Dali Lama was emblematic of Washington's efforts to foment internal unrest.

The gross political intervention of outgoing U.S. Ambassador Gary Locke in domestic Chinese politics is an indication that diplomacy is not the Obama regime's prime policy instrument when it comes to dealing with China. Ambassador Locke openly met with Uighur and Tibetan separatists and publicly disparaged China's economic success and political system while openly encouraging opposition politics (FT, 2/28/14, p. 2).

The Obama regime's attempt to advance empire in Asia via military confrontation and trade pacts, which exclude China, has led China to build-up its military capacity to avoid maritime strangulation. China answers the US trade threat by advancing its productive capacity, diversifying its trade relations, increasing its ties with Russia and deepening its domestic market.

To date, the Obama regime's reckless militarization of the Pacific has not led to an open break in relations with China, but the military road to advancing empire at China's expense threatens a global economic catastrophe or worse, a world war.

Imperial Advance: Isolating, Encircling and Degrading Russia

With the advent of President Vladimir Putin and the reconstitution of the Russian state and economy, the U.S. lost a vassal client and source of plundered wealth. Washington's empire-builders continued to seek Russian 'cooperation and collaboration' in undermining independent states, isolating China and pursuing its colonial wars. The Russian state, under Putin and Medvedev, had sought to accommodate U.S. empire builders via negotiated agreements, which would enhance Russia's position in Europe, recognize Russian strategic borders and acknowledge Russian security concerns. However, Russian diplomacy secured few and transitory gains while the US and EU made major gains with Russian complicity and passivity.

The un-stated agenda of Washington, especially with Obama's drive to re-launch a new wave of imperial conquests, was to undermine Russia's re-emergence as a major player in world politics. The strategic idea was to isolate Russia, weaken its growing international presence and return it to the vassal status of the Yeltsin period, if possible.

From the US - EU takeover of Eastern Europe , the Balkans and Baltic states, and their transformation into NATO military bases and capitalist vassal states in the early 1990's, to the penetration and pillage of Russia during the Yeltsin years, the prime purpose of Western policy has been to establish a unipolar empire under US domination.

The EU and the US proceeded to dismember Yugoslavia into subservient mini-states. They then bombed Serbia in order to carve off Kosovo, destroying one of the few independent countries still allied with Russia. The U.S. then moved on to foment uprisings in Georgia, Ukraine and Chechnya. They bombed, invaded and later occupied Iraq – a former Russian ally in the Gulf region.

The driving strategy of US policy was to encircle and reduce Russia to the status of a weak, marginal power, and to undermine Vladimir Putin's efforts to restore Russia's position as a regional power. In 2008 Washington's puppet regime in Georgia, tested the mettle of the Russian state by launching an assault on South Ossetia, killing at least 10 Russian peacekeepers and wounding hundreds (not to mention thousands of civilians). Then-Russian President Medvedev responded by sending the Russian armed forces to repel Georgian troops and support the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

U.S. diplomatic agreements with Russia had been asymmetrical – Russia was to acquiesce in Western expansion in exchange for 'political acceptance'. Duplicity trumped open-diplomacy. Despite agreements to the contrary, U.S. bases and missile installations were established throughout Eastern Europe, pointing at Russia, under the pretext that they were "really targeting Iran". Even as Russia protested that post-Cold War agreements were breached, the Empire ignored Moscow's complaints and encirclement advanced.

In a further diplomatic disaster, Russia and China signed off on a U.S.-authored United Nations Security Council agreement to allow NATO to engage in "humanitarian overflights" in Libya. NATO immediately took this as the 'green light' for attack and converted 'humanitarian intervention' into a devastating aerial bombing campaign that led to the overthrow of Libya's legitimate government and the destruction of Libya as viable, independent North African state. By signing the 'humanitarian' UN agreement, Russia and China lost a friendly government and trading partner in Africa! Even earlier, the Russians had agreed to allow the US to transport weapons and troops through Russian Federation territory to support the US invasion of Afghanistan ... with no reciprocal gain (except perhaps an even greater flood of Afghan heroin).

Russian diplomats agreed to US (Zionist)-authored UN economic sanctions against Iran's non-existent nuclear weapons program ... undermining a political ally and lucrative market. Moscow believed that by backing US sanctions on Iran and granting transport routes to Afghanistan in late 2001 they would receive some 'security guarantees' from the Americans regarding the separatist movements in the Caucasus. The U.S. 'reciprocated' by further backing Chechen separatist leaders exiled in the US despite the on-going terror campaigns against Russian civilians – up to and even after the Chechen slaughter of hundreds of school children and teachers in Beslan in 2004....

With the US under Obama advancing its encirclement of Russia in Eurasia and its isolation in North Africa and the Middle East, Putin finally decided to draw a line by backing Russia's only remaining ally in the Middle East, Syria. Putin sought to secure a negotiated end to the Western-Gulf Monarchist-backed mercenary invasion of Damascus. To little avail: The US and EU increased arms shipments, military trainers and financing to the 30,000 Islamist mercenaries based in Jordan as they engaged in cross-border attacks to overthrow the Syrian government.

Washington and Brussels continued their imperial push toward the Russian heartland by organizing and financing a violent seizure of power (putsch) in western Ukraine. The Obama regime financed a coalition of armed neo-Nazi street fighters and neo-liberal politicians, to the tune of \$5 billion dollars, to overthrow the elected regime. The putschists then moved to end Crimean autonomy and break long-standing military treaty agreements with Russia. Under enormous pressure from the autonomous Crimean government and the vast majority of the population and facing the critical loss of its naval and military facilities on the Black Sea, Putin, finally, forcefully moved Russian troops into a defensive mode in Crimea.

The Obama regime launched a series of aggressive moves against Russia to isolate it and to buttress its faltering puppet regime in Kiev: economic sanctions and expulsions were the order of the day ... Obama's seizure of the Ukraine signaled the start of a 'new Cold War'. The seizure of the Ukraine was part of Obama's grand ongoing strategy of advancing empire.

The Ukraine power grab signaled the biggest geo-political challenge to the continued existence of the Russian state. Obama seeks to extend and deepen the imperial sweep across Europe to the Caucasus: the violent regime coup and subsequent defense of the puppet regime in Kiev are key elements in undermining a key adversary— Russia.

After pretending to 'partner' with Russia, while slicing off Russian allies in the Balkans and Mid-East over the previous decades, Obama made his most audacious and reckless move. Casting off all pretexts of peaceful co-existence and mutual accommodation, the Obama regime broke a power-sharing agreement with Russia over Ukrainian governance and backed the neo-Nazi putsch.

The Obama regime assumed that having secured Russia's earlier acquiescence in the face of advancing US imperial power in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and the Gulf region, Washington's empire-builders made the fateful decision to test Russia in its most strategic geopolitical region, one directly affecting the Russian people and its most strategic military assets. Russia reacted in the only language understood in Washington and Brussels: with a major military mobilization. Obama's advance of 'empire-building via salami tactics' and duplicitous diplomacy was nearing an end.

Advancing Empire in the Middle East and Latin America

The imperial advance of the 1990's came to an end by the middle of the first decade of the new millennium. Defeats in Afghanistan, withdrawal from Iraq, the demise of puppet regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, election losses in the Ukraine and the defeat and demise of pro-U.S. neo-

liberal regimes in Latin America were exacerbated by a deepening economic crisis in the imperial centers of Europe and Wall Street.

Obama had few economic and political options to advance the empire. Yet his regime was determined to end the retreat and advance the empire; he resorted to tactics and strategies more akin to 19th century colonial and 20th century totalitarian regimes.

The methods were violent- militarism was the policy pivot. But at a time of domestic imperial exhaustion, new military tactics replaced large-scale ground force invasions. Proxy-armed mercenaries took center stage in overthrowing regimes targeted by the US. Political and ideological affinities were subsumed under the generic euphemism of “rebels”. The mass media alternated between pressuring for greater military escalation and endorsing the existing level of imperial warfare. The entire political spectrum in Europe and the US shifted rightward – even as the majority of the electorate rejected new military engagements, especially ground wars.

Obama escalated troops in Afghanistan, launched an air war that overthrew President Gadhafi and turned the Libya into a broken, failed state. Proxy wars became the new strategy to advance imperial empire-building. Syria was targeted – tens of thousands of Islamist extremists were recruited and funded by imperial regimes and despotic Gulf monarchies. Millions of refugees fled, tens of thousands were killed

In Latin America, Obama backed the military coup in Honduras overthrowing the elected Liberal government of President Manuel Zelaya, he recognized a congressional coup ousting the elected center-left government in Paraguay while refusing to recognize the election victory of President Maduro in Venezuela. In the face of Maduro’s win in Venezuela, Washington backed several months of mob street violence in an attempt to destabilize the country.

In the Ukraine, Egypt, Venezuela and Thailand, ‘the street’ replaced elections. Obama’s strategic imperial goals have focused on the re-conquest and pillage of Russia and its return to the vassal status of the Boris Yeltsin years, Latin America’s return to the neo-liberal regimes of 1990’s and China to the submissiveness of the 1980’s. The imperial strategy has been ‘to conquer from within’ setting the stage for domination from the outside.

Advancing Empire: Israel and the Middle East Detour

One of the great historical paradoxes of the U.S. imperial retreat of the 21st century has been the role played by influence of Israel and its Zionist Fifth Column embedded within the U.S. political power structure. Washington’s wars and sanctions in the Middle East have been largely at the behest of influential ‘Israel Firsters’ in the White House, Pentagon, Treasury and National Security Council and Congress.

It was largely because the US was engaged in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that Washington “neglected” China’s growing economic prowess. By concentrating on ‘wars for Israel’ in the Middle East, the U.S. has not been in a position to challenge the rise of nationalism and populism in Latin America. Protracted ‘wars for Israel’ have exhausted the US economy and the American public’s enthusiasm for new ground wars elsewhere.

Zionist ideologues, dubbed “neo-conservatives”, were instrumental in shaping the global militarist approach to empire-building and marginalizing the market-driven empire building, favored by the multi-nationals and giant extractive industry.

Obama’s attempt to halt the retreat of empire caused by Zionist militarism has not borne fruit: His effort to co-opt Zionists and pressure Israel to stop fomenting new wars in the Middle East is a failure. His ‘pivot to Asia’ has turned into a strategy of brute military encirclement of China. His overtures to Iran have been stymied by the Zionist power bloc in Congress and the imposition of Israeli-dictated terms of negotiations. The entire “advance of the empire-building project”, which was to define the Obama legacy, has been weakened by the enormous cost of heeding the advice and directives of the Israel-loyalists within his Administration. Israel, one of the most brutal colonial powers, has paradoxically and unintentionally played a major role in undermining Obama’s efforts to reverse the decline of empire and advance the U.S. diplomatic and economic dimensions of empire-building

Results and Perspectives: Advancing Empire in the Post Neo-Liberal Period

Obama’s reckless effort to advance empire in the second decade of the 21st century is far more dangerous than his predecessors in the late 20th century. Russia has recovered. It is not the disintegrating state that Bush and Clinton dismembered and pillaged. China is no longer a rising market economy so eager to trade with the US while overlooking American incursions into Chinese territorial waters. Today China is a major economic power, wielding economic leverage in the form of \$3 Trillion in U.S. Treasury notes. China no longer tolerates U.S. interference in its domestic politics- it is willing to crack down on U.S.-backed ethnic separatists and terrorists.

Latin America, including Venezuela, have developed autonomous regional organizations, diversified their markets to Asia and established a powerful post-neoliberal consensus. Venezuela has turned its military, once the favorite instrument of US-engineered coups, into a bulwark of the existing democratic order.

The electoral road to US empire-building has been closed or requires tight imperial “supervision” to secure “favorable outcomes”. Washington’s new policy of choice is violence: enlisting mob action, mercenary extremists, Islamists and Uighur terrorists, neo-Nazis and the riff raff of the world in its service.

The balance sheet of six years of “advancing empire” under Obama is in doubt. The violent overthrow of President Gadhafi did not lead to a stable client regime: the utter destruction and chaos in Libya has undercut the imperial presence. Syria is under attack but by anti-Western Islamist fanatics. The defeat of Assad will not ‘advance empire’ as much as it will expand radical Islamist (including Al Qaeda) power.

The Ukraine puppet regime of neo-liberals and neo-Nazis is literally bankrupt, riven with internal conflicts and facing profound regional divisions. Russia is threatened, but their leaders have taken decisive military action to defend their Crimean allies and strategic military bases.

Obama has provoked and threatened adversaries but has not secured much in terms of valuable allies or clients. His effort to replicate the imperial advances of the 1990's has failed because the relationships of power between Europe and Russia, Japan and China, and Venezuela and Colombia have changed. Proxies, predator drones and the US Special Forces are not able to reverse the retreat. The economic crisis has cut too deep; the domestic exhaustion with empire is too pervasive. The cost of sustaining Israel is too high. Advancing empire in these circumstances is a dangerous game: it risks a larger nuclear war to overcome adversity and retreat.