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The Rise of the Military Based Empire. Washington, “Military Workshop” of the World

US Militarist Factions in Command

By Prof. James Petras

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Over the past 15 years the US has been engaged in a series of wars, which has led many writers to refer to the ‘rise of militarism’ – the growth of an empire, built primarily by and for the projection of military power – and only secondarily to advance economic imperialism.

The rise of a military-based empire, however, does not preclude the emergence of competing, conflicting and convergent power configurations within the imperial state. These factions of the Washington elite define the objectives and targets of imperial warfare, often on their own terms.

Having stated the obvious general fact of the power of militarism within the imperial state, it is necessary to recognize that the key policy-makers, who direct the wars and military policy, will vary according to the country targeted, type of warfare engaged in and their conception of the war. In other words, while US policy is imperialist and highly militaristic, the key policymakers, their approach and the outcomes of their policies will differ. There is no fixed strategy devised by a cohesive Washington policy elite guided by a unified strategic vision of the US Empire.

In order to understand the current, seemingly endless wars, we have to examine the shifting coalitions of elites, who make decisions in Washington but not always primarily for Washington. Some factions of the policy elite have clear conceptions of the American empire, but others improvise and rely on superior ‘political’ or ‘lobbying’ power to successfully push their agenda in the face of repeated failures and suffer no consequences or costs.

We will start by listing US imperial wars during the last decade and a half. We will then identify the main policy-making faction which has been the driving force in each war. We will discuss their successes and failures as imperial policy makers and conclude with an evaluation of “the state of the empire” and its future.

Imperial Wars: From 2001 – 2015

The current war cycle started in late 2001 with the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. This was followed by the invasion and occupation of Iraq in March 2003, the US arms support for Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 2006, the proxy invasion of Somalia in 2006/7; the massive re-escalation of war in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2007 – 2009; the bombing, invasion ‘regime change’ in Libya in 2011; the ongoing proxy-mercenary war against Syria (since 2012), and the ongoing 2015 Saudi-US invasion and destruction of Yemen. In Europe, the US was behind the 2014 proxy putsch and violent ‘regime change’ in Ukraine which has led to an ongoing war against ethnic Russian speakers in south-east Ukraine, especially the populous industrial heartland of the Donbas region.

Over the past 15 years, there have been overt and covert military interventions, accompanied by an intense, provocative military build-up along Russia’s borders in the Baltic States, Eastern Europe (especially Poland), the Balkans (Bulgaria and Romania) and the mammoth US base in Kosovo; in Central Europe with nuclear missiles in Germany and, of course, the annexation of Ukraine and Georgia as US-NATO clients.

Parallel to the military provocations encircling Russia, Washington has launched a major military, political, economic and diplomatic offensive aimed at isolating China and affirming US supremacy in the Pacific.

In South American, US military intervention found expression via Washington-orchestrated business-military coup attempts in Venezuela in 2002 and Bolivia in 2008, and a successful

‘regime change’ in Honduras in 2009, overthrowing its elected president and installing a US puppet.

In summary, the US has been engaged in two, three or more wars since 2001, defining an almost exclusively militarist empire, run by an imperial state directed by civilian and military officials seeking unchallenged global dominance through violence.

Washington: Military Workshop of the World

War and violent regime change are the exclusive means through which the US now advances its foreign policy. However, the various Washington war-makers among the power elite do not form a unified bloc with common priorities. Washington provides the weapons, soldiers and financing for whichever power configuration or faction among the elite is in a position, by design or default, to seize the initiative and push their own war agenda.

The invasion of Afghanistan was significant in so far as it was seen by all sectors of the militarist elite, as the first in a series of wars. Afghanistan was to set the stage for the launching of higher priority wars elsewhere.

Afghanistan was followed by the infamous ‘Axis of Evil’ speech, dictated by Tel Aviv, penned by presidential speech-writer, David Fromm and mouthed by the brainless President Bush, II. The ‘*Global War on Terror*’ was the thinly veiled slogan for serial wars around the world. Washington measured the loyalty of its vassals among the nations of Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America by their support for the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. The Afghan invasion provided the template for future wars. It led to an unprecedented increase in the military budget and ushered in ‘Caesar’-like dictatorial presidential powers to order and execute wars, silencing domestic critics and sending scores of thousands of US and NATO troops to the ‘Hindu Kush’.

In itself, Afghanistan was never any threat and certainly no economic prize for plunder and profit. The Taliban had not attacked the US. Osama Bin Laden could have been turned over to a judicial tribunal – as the governing Taliban had insisted.

The US military (with its ‘Coalition of the Willing’ or COW) successfully invaded and occupied Afghanistan and set up a vassal regime in Kabul. It built scores of military bases and attempted to form an obedient colonial army. In the meantime, the Washington militarist elite had moved on to bigger and, for the Israel-centric Zionist elite, higher priority wars, namely Iraq.

The decision to invade Afghanistan was not opposed by any of Washington’s militarist elite factions. They all shared the idea of using a successful military blitz or ‘cake-walk’ against the abysmally impoverished Afghanistan as a way to rabble rouse the American masses into accepting a long period of intense and costly global warfare throughout the world.

Washington’s militarist elites fabricated the link between the attacks on 9/11/2001 and Afghanistan’s governing Taliban and the presence of the Saudi warlord Osama Bin Laden. Despite the ‘fact’ that most of the ‘hijackers’ were from the kingdom of Saudi Arabia

and none were Afghans, invading and destroying Afghanistan was to be the initial test to gauge the highly manipulated and frightened American public's willingness to shoulder the burden of a huge new cycle of imperial wars. This has been the only aspect of the invasion of Afghanistan that could be viewed as a policy success – it made the costs of endless wars 'acceptable' to a relentlessly propagandized public.

Flush with their military victories in the Hindu Kush, the Washington militarists turned to Iraq and fabricated a series of increasingly preposterous pretexts for war: Linking the 9/11 'jihadi' hijackers with the secular regime of Saddam Hussein, whose intolerance for violent Islamists (especially the Saudi variety) was well documented, and concocting a whole fabric of lies about Iraqi 'weapons of mass destruction' which provided the propaganda basis for invading an already disarmed, blockaded and starved Iraq in March 2003.

Leading the Washington militarists in designing the war to destroy Iraq were the Zionists, including Paul Wolfowitz, Elliot Abrams, Richard Perle, and a few Israel-centric Gentile militarists, such as Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. The Zionists had a powerful entourage in key positions in the State Department, Treasury and the Pentagon.

There were 'outsiders' – non-Zionists and militarists within these institutions, especially the Pentagon, who voiced reservations – but they were brushed aside, not consulted and 'encouraged' to retire.

None of the 'old hands' in the State Department or Pentagon bought into the hysteria about Sadaam Hussein's *weapons of mass destruction*, but to voice reservations was to risk one's career. The manufacture and dissemination of the pretext for invading Iraq was orchestrated by a small team of operatives linking Tel Aviv and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz's "Office of Special Plans", a tight group of Zionists and some Israelis headed by Abram Shulsky (Sept. 2002 – June 2003).

The US war on Iraq was an important part of Israel's agenda to 're-make the Middle East' to establish its unchallenged regional hegemony and execute a 'final solution' for its own vexing 'Arab (native Palestinian) problem': It was made operational by the powerful Zionist faction within the Executive (White House), which had assumed almost dictatorial powers after the attack on 9/11/2001. Zionists planned the war, designed the 'occupation policy' and 'succeeded wildly' with the eventual dismemberment of a once modern secular nationalist Arab state.

In order to smash the Iraqi state – the US occupation policy was to eliminate (through mass firings, jailing and assassination) all high level, experienced Iraqi civil, military and scientific personnel – down to high school principals. They dismantled any vital infrastructure (which had not been already destroyed by the decades of US sanctions and bombing under President Clinton) and reduced an agriculturally advanced Iraq to a barren wasteland which would take centuries to recover and could never challenge Israel's colonization of Palestine, let alone its military supremacy in the Middle East. Naturally, the large Palestinian Diaspora refugee population in Iraq was targeted for 'special treatment'.

But Zionist policymakers had a much larger agenda than erasing Iraq as a viable country: They had a longer list of targets: Syria, Iran, Lebanon and Libya, whose destructions were to be carried out with US and NATO blood and treasure (and not a single Israeli soldier).

Despite the fact that Iraq did not even possess a functioning air force or navy in March 2003 and Afghanistan in late 2001 was rather primitive, the invasions of both countries turned out to be very costly to the US. The US completely failed to benefit from its ‘victory and occupation’, despite Paul Wolfowitz’ boasts that the pillage of Iraq’s oil fields would pay for the entire project in a ‘few months’. This was because the real Zionist plan was to destroy these nations – beyond any possibility for a quick or cheap imperialist economic gain. Scorching the earth and salting the fields is not a very profitable policy for empire builders.

Israel has been the biggest winner with no cost for the ‘Jewish State’. The American Zionist policy elite literally handed them the services of the largest and richest armed forces in history: the US. ‘Israel-Firsters’ played a decisive role among Washington policy-makers and Tel Aviv celebrated in the streets! They came, they dominated policy and they accomplished their mission: Iraq (and millions of its people) was destroyed.

The US gained an unreliable, broken colony, with a devastated economy and systematically destroyed infrastructure and without the functioning civil service needed for a modern state. To pay for the mess, the American people faced a spiraling budget deficit, tens of thousands of American war casualties and massive cuts in their own social programs. Crowning the Washington war-makers’ victory was the disarticulation of American civil and constitutional rights and liberties and the construction of a enormous domestic police state.

After the Iraq disaster, the same influential Zionist faction in Washington lost no time in demanding a new war against Israel’s bigger enemy – namely Iran. In the ensuing years, they failed to push the US to attack Teheran but they succeeded in imposing crippling sanctions on Iran. The Zionist faction secured massive US military support for Israel’s abortive invasion of Lebanon and its devastating series of blitzkriegs against the impoverished and trapped people of Gaza.

The Zionist faction successfully shaped US military interventions to meet Israel’s regional ambitions against three Arab countries: Yemen, Syria and Libya.. The Zionists were not able to manipulate the US into attacking Iran because the traditional militarist faction in Washington balked: With instability in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US was not well positioned to face a major conflagration throughout the Middle East, South Asia and beyond – which a ground and air war with Iran would involve. However, the Zionist factions did secure brutal economic sanctions and the appointment of key Israel-Centric officials within the US Treasury. Secretary Stuart Levey, at the start of the Obama regime, and David Cohen afterwards, were positioned to enforce the sanctions.

Even before the ascendancy of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Tel Aviv’s military objectives after Iraq, including Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Libya and Yemen had to be spaced over time, because the non-Zionist factions among Washington’s elite had been unable to integrate occupied Afghanistan and Iraq into the empire.

Resistance, armed conflict and military advances in both Afghanistan and Iraq never ceased and are continuing into their 2nd decade. As soon as the US would withdraw from a region, declaring it ‘pacified’, the armed resistance would move back in and the local sepoys would defect to the rebels or take off for London or Washington with millions in pillaged loot.

‘Unfinished wars’, mounting casualties and spiraling costs, with no end in sight, undermined the agreement between the militarist and the Zionist factions in the Executive branch. However, the massively powerful Zionist presence in the US Congress provided a platform to bray for new and even bigger wars.

Israel’s vicious invasion of Lebanon in 2006 was defeated despite receiving massive US arms supplies, a US funded ‘Iron Dome’ missile defense system and intelligence assistance. Tel Aviv could not defeat the highly disciplined and motivated Hezbollah fighters in South Lebanon despite resorting to carpet bombing of civilian neighborhoods with millions of banned cluster munitions and picking off ambulances and churches sheltering refugees. Israelis have been much more triumphal murdering lightly armed Palestinian resistance fighters and stone-throwing children.

Libya: A Multi-faction War for the Militarists (without Big Oil)

The war against Libya was a result of multiple factions among the Washington militarist elite, including the Zionists, coming together with French, English and German militarists to smash the most modern, secular, independent state in Africa under President Muammar Gaddafi.

The aerial campaign against the Gaddafi regime had virtually no organized support within Libya with which to reconstruct a viable neo-colonial state ripe for pillage. This was another ‘planned dismemberment’ of a complex, modern republic which had been independent of the US Empire.

The war succeeded wildly in shredding Libya’s economy, state and society. It unleashed scores of armed terrorist groups,(who appropriated the modern weapons of Gaddafi’s army and police) and uprooted two million black contract workers and Libyan citizens of South Saharan origin forcing them to flee the rampaging racist militias to the refugee camps of Europe. Untold thousands died in rickety boats in the Mediterranean Sea.

The entire war was carried out to the publicly giddy delight of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her ‘humanitarian interventionist’ lieutenants (Susan Rice and Samantha Power), who were utterly ignorant as to who and what the Libyan “*opposition*” represented. Eventually, even Hillary’s own Ambassador to Libya would be slaughtered by . . . the same victorious US-backed ‘*rebels*’ (sic) in the newly liberated Bengasi!

The Zionist faction destroyed Gaddafi (whose capture, grotesque torture and murder was filmed and widely disseminated), eliminating another real adversary of Israel and supporter of Palestinian rights. The US militarist faction, which led the war, got nothing positive – not even a secure naval, air or training base – only a dead Ambassador, millions of desperate refugees flooding Europe and thousands of trained and armed jihadists for the next target: Syria.

For a while Libya became the main supply-line for Islamist mercenaries and arms to invade Syria and fight the secular nationalist government in Damascus.

Once again the *least influential faction* in Washington turned out to be the oil and gas industry, which lost lucrative contracts it had already signed with the Gaddafi regime. Thousands of highly trained foreign oil workers were withdrawn. After Iraq, it should have been obvious that these wars were not '*for oil*'!

Ukraine: Coups, Wars and Russia's 'Underbelly'

With the US-orchestrated coup and intervention in Ukraine, the militarist factions once again seized the initiative, establishing a puppet regime in Kiev and targeting Russia's strategic 'soft underbelly'. The plan had been to take over Russia's strategic military bases in Crimea and cut Russia from the vital military-industrial complexes in the Donbas region with its vast iron and coal reserves.

The mechanics of the power grab were relatively well planned, the political clients were put in power, but the US militarists had made no contingencies for propping up the Ukrainian economy, cut loose from its main trading partner and oil and gas supplier, Russia.

The coup led to a 'proxy war' in the ethnic-Russian majority regions in the south east (the Donbas) with four 'unanticipated consequences'. 1) a country divided east and west along ethno-linguistic lines, (2) a bankrupt economy made even worse by the imposition of an IMF austerity program, (3) a corrupt crony capitalist elite, which was '*pro-West by bank account*', (4) and, after two years, mass disaffection among voters toward the US puppet regime.

The militarists in Washington and Brussels succeeded in engineering the coup in Ukraine but lacked the domestic allies, plans and preparations to run the country and successfully annex it to the EU and NATO as a viable country.

Apparently the militarist factions in the State Department and Pentagon are much more proficient in stage managing coups and invasions than in establishing a stable regime as part of a New World Order. They succeed in the former and fail repeatedly in the latter.

The Pivot to Asia and the Pirouette to Syria

During most of the previous decade, traditional global strategists in Washington increasingly objected to the Zionist faction's domination and direction of US war policies focused on the Middle East for the benefit of Israel, instead of meeting the growing challenge of the new world economic superpower in Asia, China.

US economic supremacy in Asia had been deeply eroded as China's economy grew at double digits. Beijing was displacing the US as the major trade partner in the Latin American and African markets. Meanwhile, the top 500 US MNC's were heavily invested in China. Three years into President Obama's first term the '*China militarist faction*' announced a shift from the

Middle East and the Israel-centric agenda to a '*pivot to Asia*', the source of 40% of the world's industrial output.

But it was not profits and markets that motivated Washington's Asia faction among the militarist elites – it was military power. Even trade agreements, like the TransPacific Partnership (TPP), were viewed as tools to encircle and weaken China militarily and undermine its regional influence.

Led by the hysterical Pentagon boss Ashton Carter, Washington prepared a series of major military confrontations with Beijing off the coast of China.

The US signed expanded military base agreements with the Philippines, Japan and Australia; it participated in military exercises with Vietnam, South Korea and Malaysia; it dispatched battleships and aircraft carriers into Chinese territorial waters.

The US confrontational trade policy was formulated by the Zionist trio: Secretary of Commerce, Penny Pritzker, Trade Negotiator Michael Froman (who works for both the Asia militarist and Zionist factions) and Treasury Secretary Jake Lew. The result was the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), involving 12 Pacific countries while deliberating excluding China. Washington's Asian militarist faction planned to militarize the entire Pacific Basin, in order to dominate the maritime trade routes and, at a moment's notice, choke off all of China's overseas markets and suppliers – shades of the series of US provocations against Japan leading up to the US entering WW2.

The 'Asia-militarist faction' successfully demanded a bigger military budget to accommodate its vastly more aggressive posture toward China.

Predictably, China has insisted on defending its maritime routes and has increased its naval and air base building and sea and air patrols. Also, predictably, China has countered the US-dominated TPP by setting-up a one hundred billion dollar Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), while contributing to the multi-billion dollar BRICS Bank. Meanwhile, China even signed a separate \$30 billion dollar trade agreement with Washington's strategic 'partner', Britain. In fact, Britain followed the rest of the EU and joined the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank – despite objections from Washington's "Asia faction".

While the US depends heavily on its military pacts with South Korea and Japan, the latter nations have been meeting with China – their most significant trading partner – to work on expanding and deepening economic ties.

Up until 2014, the "*business-with-China faction*" of the Washington elite played a key role in the making of US-Asia policy. However, they have been eclipsed by the Asia militarist-faction, which is taking US policy in a totally different direction: Pushing China out as Asia's economic superpower and escalating military confrontation with Beijing now heads Washington's agenda.

Ashton Carter, the US Defense Secretary, has China, the second most important economy in the world in the Pentagon's 'cross-hairs'. When the TPP failed to curtail China's expansion, the

militarist faction shifted Washington toward a high risk military course, which could destabilize the region and risk a nuclear confrontation.

The Pirouette: China and Syria

Meanwhile in the Levant, Washington's Zionist faction has been busy running a proxy war in Syria. The *pivot to Asia* has had to compete with the *pirouette to Syria and Yemen*.

The US joined Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the Gulf Emirates and the EU in sponsoring a replay of the Libyan 'regime change' – sponsoring proxy terrorists from around the globe into invading and devastating Syria. Damascus has been attacked from all sides for the 'crime' of being secular and multi-ethnic; for being pro-Palestinian; for being allied with Iran and Lebanon ; for having an independent foreign policy; and for maintaining a limited representative (but not necessarily democratic) government. For these crimes, the West, Israel and the Saudis would have Syria fractured into ethnically cleansed 'tribal state' – something they had accomplished in Iraq and Libya.

The US militarist faction (personified by Secretary of Defense Carter and Senators McCain and Graham) have funded, trained and equipped the terrorists, whom they call 'moderates' and had clearly expected their progeny to follow Washington's directions. The emergence of Isis showed just how close these 'moderates' stuck to Washington's script.

Initially, the traditional militarist wing of Washington's elite resisted the Zionist faction's demand for direct US military intervention (American '*boots on the ground*'). That is changing with recent (very convenient) events in Paris.

Warfare: From Piecemeal Interventions to Nuclear Confrontation

The Washington militarists have again committed more US soldiers to Iraq and Afghanistan; American fighter planes and Special Forces are in Syria and Yemen. Meanwhile, US naval armadas aggressively patrol the coasts of China and Iran. The militarist – Zionist 'compromise' over Syria was comprised of an initial contingent of 50 US Special Forces to join in 'limited' combat roles with ("loyal" sic) Islamist mercenaries – the so-called 'moderates'. There are commitments for greater and heavier weaponry to come, including ground to air missiles capable of shooting down Russian and Syrian military jets.

Elite Factional Politics: An Overview

How does the record of these competing factions, formulating US imperial war policies in the Middle East over the past 15 years stack up? Clearly there has been no coherent imperial economic strategy.

The policy toward Afghanistan is remarkable for its failure to end the longest war in US history – over 14 years of occupation! The recent attempts by US-led client *NATO* forces to withdraw have been immediately followed by military advances by the nationalist-Islamist resistance militia – the Taliban, which controls much of the countryside. The possibility of a collapse of

the current puppet in Kabul has forced the militarists in Washington to retain US bases – surrounded by completely hostile rural populations.

The Afghan war's initial appearance of success triggered new wars – *inter alia Iraq*. But taking the long view, the Afghan war, has been a miserable failure in terms of the stated strategic goal of establishing a stable client government. The Afghan economy collapsed: opium production (which had been significantly suppressed by the Taliban's poppy eradication campaign in 2000-2001) is the now predominant crop – with cheap heroin flooding Europe and beyond. Under the weight of massive and all pervasive corruption by 'loyal' client officials – the Afghan treasury is empty. The puppet rulers are totally disconnected from the most important regional, ethnic, religious and family clans and associations.

Washington could not 'find' any viable economic classes in Afghanistan with which to anchor a development strategy. They did not come to terms with the deep ethno-religious consciousness rooted in rural communities and fought the most popular political force among the majority Pashtu, the Taliban, which had no role in the attack on '9/11'.

They artificially slapped together a massive army of surly illiterates under Western imperial command and watched it fall apart at the seams, defect to the Taliban or turn their own guns on the foreign occupation troops. These "*mistakes*", which accounted for the failure of the militarist faction in the Afghanistan war were due, in no small part, to the pressure and influence of the Zionist faction who wanted to quickly move on to their highest priority, a US war against Israel's first priority enemy – Iraq – without consolidating the US control in Afghanistan. For the Zionists, Afghanistan (envisioned as a 'cake-walk' or quick victory) was just a tool to set the stage for a much larger sequence of US wars against Israel's regional Arab and Persian adversaries.

Before the militarists could establish any viable order and an enduring governmental structure in Afghanistan, attention shifted to a Zionist-centered war against Iraq.

The build-up for the US war against Iraq has to be understood as a project wholly engineered by and for the state of Israel, mostly through its agents within the US government and Washington policy elite. The goal was to establish Israel as the unchallenged political-military power in the region using American troops and money and preparing the ground for Tel Aviv's "final solution" for the Palestinian 'problem'; total expulsion...

The US military and occupation campaign included the wholesale and systematic destruction of Iraq: Its law and order, culture, economy and society – so there would be no possibility of recovery. Such a vicious campaign did not resonate with any productive sector of the US economy (or for that matter with any Israeli economic interest).

Washington's Zionist faction set about in a parody of 'Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge' to identify and destroy any competent, experienced Iraqi professional, civil servant, scientist, intellectual, or military official capable of re-organizing and re-building the county and war-battered society. They were assassinated, arrested, tortured or driven into exile. The occupation deliberately encouraged religious parties and traditional tribes to engage in inter-communal

massacres and ethnic cleansing. In other words, the Zionist faction did not pursue the traditionally understood policy of empire building which would incorporate the second tier functionaries of a conquered state to form a competent client regime and use Iraq's great oil and gas wealth to build its economy. Instead they chose to impose a scorched earth policy; setting loose organized sectarian armies, imposing the rule of grotesquely corrupt ex-pats and placing the most venal, sectarian clients in positions of power. The effect has been to transform the most advanced, secular Arab country into an 'Afghanistan' and in less than 15 years destroying centuries of culture and community.

The goal of the 'Zionist strategy' was to destroy Iraq as Israel's regional rival. The cost of over a million Iraqi dead and many million refugees did not prick any conscience in Washington or Tel Aviv.

After all, Washington's traditional 'militarist faction' picked up the bill (costing hundreds of billions) which they passed on to the American taxpayers (well over one trillion dollars) and used the deaths and suffering of tens of thousands of American troops to provide a pretext for spreading more chaos. The result of their mayhem includes the specter of 'Isis', which they may consider to be a success – since hysteria over 'Isis' pushes the West 'closer to Israel'.

The sheer scale of death and destruction inflicted on the Iraqi population by the Zionist faction led to thousands of highly competent Ba'athist officers, who had survived 'Shock and Awe' and the sectarian massacres, to join armed Islamist Sunnis and eventually form the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This group of experienced Iraqi military officers formed the strategic technical core of Isis which launched a devastating offensive in Iraq in 2014 – taking major cities in the north and completely routing the US-trained puppet armies of the 'government' in Baghdad. From there they moved into Syria and beyond. It is fundamental to understanding the roots of ISIS: The Zionist faction among US militarist policymakers imposed a deliberate '*scorched earth*' occupation policy, which united highly trained nationalist Ba'athist military officers with young Sunni fighters ,both locals and increasingly foreign jihadist mercenaries. These deracinated members of the traditional Iraqi nationalist military elite had lost their families to the sectarian massacres; they were persecuted, tortured, driven underground and highly motivated. They literally had nothing left to lose!

This core of the Isis leadership stands in stark contrast to the colonial, corrupt and demoralized army slapped together by the US military with more cash than morale. ISIS quickly swept through half of Iraq and came within 40 miles of Baghdad.

The US militarist faction faced military defeat after eight years of war. They mobilized, financed and armed their client Kurdish mercenaries in northern Iraq and recruited the Shia Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to appeal to the Shia militia.

ISIS exploited the Western-backed Islamist uprising in Syria – and extended their sweep well across the border. Syria had accepted a million Iraqi refugees from the US invasion, including many of Iraq's surviving experienced nationalist administrative elite. The US militarists are in a dilemma – another full-scale war would not be politically feasible, and its military outcome

uncertain...Moreover the US was aligned with dubious allies – especially the Saudis – who had their own regional ambitions

Turkey and Saudi Arabia, Israel and the Kurds were each eager to expand their power territorially and politically.

In the midst of this, the traditional Washington militarists are left with no overall viable imperialist strategy. Instead they improvise with faux ‘rebels’, who claim to be moderates and democrats, while taking US guns and dollars and ultimately joining the most powerful Islamist groups – like Isis.

Throwing a wrench into the machinery of Israeli-Saudi hegemonic ambitions, Russia, Iran and Hezbollah have sided with the secular Syrian government. Russia finally moved to bomb Isis strongholds – after identifying a significant Isis contingent of militant Chechens whose ultimate aims are to bring war and terror back to Russia.

The US-EU war against Libya unleashed all the retrograde mercenary forces from three continents (Africa, Asia and Europe) and Washington finds itself with no means to control them. Washington could not even protect its own consulate in their “liberated” regional capital of Benghazi – the US ambassador and two intelligence aides were killed by Washington’s own ‘rebels’. The competing and cooperating factions of the Washington militarist elite placed Libya on a steaming platter: Serving up invasion, regicide and hundreds of thousands of refugees, which they did not bother to even ‘season’ with any plan or strategy – just unadulterated scorched earth against another opponent of Zionism. And a potentially lucrative strategic neo-colony in North Africa has been lost with no accountability for the Washington architects of such barbarism.

Latin America: The Last Outpost of the Multi-Nationals

As we have seen, the major theaters of imperial policy (the Middle East and Asia) have been dominated by militarists, not professional diplomats-linked to the MNCs. Latin America stands as something of an exception. In Latin America, US policymakers have been guided by big business interests. Their main focus has been on pushing the neo-liberal agenda. Eventually this has meant promoting the US-centered ‘free trade’ agreements, joint military exercises, shared military bases, and political backing for the US global military agenda.

The ‘militarist faction’ in Washington worked with the traditional business faction in support of the unsuccessful military coups in Venezuela (2002 and 2014), the attempted coup in Bolivia 2008, and a successful regime change in Honduras (2010).

To harass the independent Argentine government which was developing closer diplomatic and trade ties with Iran, a sector of the US Zionist financial elite (the ‘vulture fund’ magnate Paul Singer) joined forces with the Zionist militarist faction to raise hysterical accusations against President Cristina Kirchner over the ‘mysterious’ suicide of a Israel-linked Argentine prosecutor. The prosecutor, Alberto Nisman, had devoted his career to ‘cooking up a case’ against Iran with the aid of the Mossad and CIA for the unsolved, bombing the Buenos Aires

Jewish community center in 1994. Various investigations had exonerated Iran and the “Nisman Affaire” was an intense effort to keep Argentina from trading with Iran.

The Washington business faction operated in a mildly hostile Latin America for most of the past decade. However, it was able to recover influence, via a series of bilateral free trade agreements and took advantage of the end of the commodity cycle. The latter weakened the center-left regimes and moved them closer to Washington.

The ‘excesses’ committed by the US backed military dictatorships during the nineteen sixties through eighties, and the crisis of the neo-liberal nineties, set the stage for the rise of a relatively moderate business-diplomatic faction to come to the fore in Washington. It is also the case that the various militarist and Zionist factions in Washington were focused elsewhere (Europe, Middle East and Asia). In any case the US political elite operates in Latin America mostly via political and business proxies, for the time being.

Conclusion

From our brief survey, it is clear that wars play a key role in US foreign policy in most regions of the world. However, war policies in different regions respond to different factions in the governing elite.

The traditional militarist faction predominates creating confrontations in Ukraine, Asia and along the Russian border. Within that framework the US Army, Air Force and Special Forces play a leading, and fairly conventional, role. In the Far East, the Navy and Air Force predominate.

In the Middle East and South Asia, the military (Army and Air Force) factions share power with the Zionist faction . Fundamentally the Zionist dictate policy on Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine and the militarists follow.

Both factions overlapped in creating the debacle in Libya.

The factions form shifting coalitions, supporting wars of interest to their respective power centers. The militarists and Zionists worked together in launching the Afghan war; but once launched, the Zionists abandoned Kabul and concentrated on preparing for the invasion and occupation of Iraq, which was of far greater interest to Israel.

It should be noted that at no point did the oil and business elite play any significant role in war policy. The Zionist faction pushed hard to secure direct US ground intervention in Libya and Syria, but was not able to force the US to send large contingents of ground troops due to opposition from the Russians as well as a growing sector of the US electorate. Likewise, the Zionists played a leading role in successfully imposing sanctions against Iran and a major role in prosecuting banks around the world accused of violating the sanctions. However, they were not able to block the military faction from securing a diplomatic agreement with Iran over its uranium enrichment program – without going to war.

Clearly, the business faction plays a major role in promoting US trade agreements and tries to lift or avoid sanctions against important real and potential trade partners like China, Iran and Cuba.

The Zionists faction among the Washington elite policymakers take positions which consistently push for wars and aggressive policies against any regime targeted by Israel. The differences between the traditional militarist and Zionist factions are blurred by most writers who scrupulously avoid identifying Zionist decision-makers, but there is no question of who benefits and who loses.

The kind of war which the Zionists promote and implement – the utter destruction of enemy countries – undermines any plans by the traditional militarist faction and the military to consolidate power in an occupied country and incorporate it into a stable empire.

It is a serious error to lump these factions together: the business, Zionist and various militarist factions of the Washington policy making elite are not one homogeneous group. They may overlap at times, but they also differ as to interests, liabilities, ideology and loyalties. They also differ in their institutional allegiances.

The overarching militarist ideology, which permeates US imperial foreign policy obscures a deep and recurrent weakness – US policymakers master the mechanics of war but have no strategy for ruling after intervening. This has been glaringly evident in all recent wars: Iraq, Syria, Libya, Ukraine etc. Improvisation has repeatedly led to monumental failures: from financing phantom armies to bleeding billions to prop-up incompetent, kleptocratic puppet regimes. Despite the hundreds of billions of public money wasted in these serial disasters, no policymaker has been held to account.

Long wars and short memories are the norm for Washington's militarist rulers who do not lose sleep over their blunders. The Zionists, for their part, do not even need a strategy for rule. They push the US into wars for Israel, and once having destroyed "the enemy country" they leave a vacuum to be filled by chaos. The American public provides the gold and blood for these misadventures and reaps nothing but domestic deterioration and greater international strife.