

## Fifty Years of Imperial Wars: Results and Perspectives

**James Petras**

### **Introduction**

Over the past 50 years the US and European powers have engaged in countless imperial wars throughout the world. The drive for world supremacy has been clothed in the rhetoric of “world leadership”, the consequences have been devastating for the peoples targeted. The biggest, longest and most numerous wars have been carried out by the United States. Presidents from both parties direct and preside over this quest for world power. The ideology which informs imperialism varies from “anti-communism” in the past to “anti-terrorism” today.

Washington’s drive for world domination has used and combined many forms of warfare, including military invasions and occupations; proxy mercenary armies and military coups; financing political parties, NGO’s and street mobs to overthrow duly constituted governments. The driving forces in the imperial state, behind the quest for world power, vary with the geographic location and social economic composition of the targeted countries.

What is clear from an analysis of US empire building over the last half century is the relative decline of economic interests, and the rise of politico-military considerations. In part this is because of the demise of the collectivist regimes (the USSR and Eastern Europe) and the conversion of China and the leftist Asian, African and Latin American regimes to capitalism. The decline of economic forces as the driving force of imperialism is a result of the advent of global neoliberalism. Most US and EU multi-nationals are not threatened by nationalizations or expropriations, which might trigger imperial state political intervention.

In fact, MNC are invited to invest, trade and exploit natural resources even by post-neoliberal regimes . Economic interests come into play in formulating imperial state policies, if and when nationalist regimes emerge and challenge US MNC as is the case in Venezuela under President Chavez.

The key to US empire building over the past half-century is found in the political, military and ideological power configurations which have come to control the levers of the imperial state. The recent history of US imperial wars has demonstrated that strategic military priorities – military bases, budgets and bureaucracy – have expanded far beyond any localized economic interests of MNC. Moreover, the vast expenditures and long term and expensive military interventions of the US imperial state in the Middle East has been at the behest of Israel. The take-over of strategic political positions in the Executive branch and Congress by the powerful Zionist power configuration within the US has reinforced the centrality of military over economic interests

The ‘privatization’ of imperial wars – the vast growth and use of mercenaries contracted by the Pentagon- has led to the vast pillage of tens of billions of dollars from the US Treasury. Large scale corporations which supply mercenary military combatants have become a very ‘influential’ force shaping the nature and consequences of US empire building.

Military strategists, defenders of Israeli colonial interests in the Middle East, mercenary military and intelligence corporations are central actors in the imperial state and it is their decision-making influence which explains why US imperial wars do not result in a politically stable, economic prosperous empire. Instead their policies have resulted in unstable, ravaged economies, in perpetual rebellion..

We will proceed by identifying the changing areas and regions of US empire building from the mid 1970's to the present. We then examine the methods, driving forces and outcomes of imperial expansion. We will then turn to describe the current 'geo-political map of empire building' and the varied nature of the anti-imperialist resistance. We will conclude by examining the why and how of empire building and more particularly, the consequences, and results of a half century of US imperial expansion.

### **Imperialism in the post Vietnam Period: Proxy Wars in Central America, Afghanistan and Southern Africa**

The US imperialist defeat in Indo-China marks the end of one phase of empire building and the beginning of another: a shift from territorial invasions to proxy wars. Hostile domestic opinion precluded large scale ground wars. Beginning during the presidencies of Gerald Ford and James Carter, the US imperialist state increasingly relied on proxy clients. It recruited, financed and armed proxy military forces to destroy a variety of nationalist and social revolutionary regimes and movements in three continents. Washington financed and armed extremist Islamic forces world-wide to invade and destroy the secular, modernizing, Soviet backed regime in Afghanistan, with logistical support from the Pakistan military and intelligence agencies, and financial backing from Saudi Arabia.

The second proxy intervention was in Southern Africa, where the US imperial state financed and armed proxy forces against anti-imperialist regimes in Angola and Mozambique, in alliance with South Africa.

The third proxy intervention took place in Central America, where the US financed, armed and trained murderous death squad regimes in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and

Honduras to decimate popular movements and armed insurgencies resulting in over 300,000 civilian deaths.

The US imperial state's 'proxy strategy' extended to South America: CIA and Pentagon backed military coups took place in Uruguay (General Alvarez), Chile (General Pinochet) Argentina (General Videla), Bolivia (General Banzer) and Peru (General Morales). Empire building by proxy, was largely at the behest of US MNC which were the principal actors in setting priorities in the imperial state throughout this period.

Accompanying proxy wars, were direct military invasions: the tiny island of Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989) under Presidents' Reagan and Bush, Sr. Easy targets, with few casualties and low cost military expenditures: dress rehearsals for re-launching major military operations in the near future.

What is striking about the 'proxy wars' are the mixed results. The outcomes in Central America, Afghanistan and Africa did not lead to prosperous neo-colonies or prove lucrative to US multi-national corporations. In contrast the proxy coups in South America led to large scale privatization and profits for US MNC.

The Afghan proxy war led to the rise and consolidation of the Taliban "Islamic regime" which opposed both Soviet influence and US imperial expansion. The rise and consolidation of Islamic nationalism in turn challenged US allies in South Asia and the Gulf region and subsequently led to a US military invasion in 2001 and a prolonged (15 year) war (which has yet to conclude), and most probably to a military retreat and defeat. The main economic beneficiaries were Afghan political clients, US mercenary military "contractors",

military procurement officers and civilian colonial administrators who pillaged hundreds of billions from the US Treasury in illegal and fraudulent transactions.

Pillage of the US Treasury in no way benefited the non-military MNC's. In fact the war and resistance movement undermined any large scale, long-term entry of US private capital in Afghanistan and adjoining border regions of Pakistan.

The proxy war in Southern Africa devastated the local economies, especially the domestic agricultural economy, uprooted millions of laborers and farmers and curtailed US corporate oil penetration for over two decades. The 'positive' outcome was the de-radicalization of the former revolutionary nationalist elite. However, the political conversion of the Southern African "revolutionaries" to neo-liberalism did not benefit the US MNC as much as the rulers turned kleptocratic oligarchs who organized patrimonial regimes in association with a diversified collection of MNC, especially from Asia and Europe.

The proxy wars in Central America had mixed results. In Nicaragua the Sandinista revolution defeated the US-Israeli backed Somoza regime but immediately confronted a US financed, armed and trained counter-revolutionary mercenary army (the "Contras") based in Honduras. The US war destroyed, many of the progressive economic projects, undermined the economy and eventually led to an electoral victory by the US backed political client Violeta Chamorro. Two decades later the US proxies were defeated by a de-radicalized Sandinista led political coalition.

In El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, the US proxy wars led to the consolidation of client regimes presiding over the destruction of the productive economy, and the flight of

millions of war refugees to the United States. US imperial dominance eroded the bases for a productive labor market which spawned the growth of murderous drug gangs.

In summary, the US proxy wars succeeded, in most, cases in preventing the rise of nationalist-leftist regimes, but also led to the destructive of the economic and political bases of a stable and prosperous empire of neo-colonies.

### **US Imperialism in Latin America: Changing Structure, External and Internal Contingencies, Shifting Priorities and Global Constraints.**

To understand the operations, structure and performance of US imperialism in Latin America, it is necessary to recognize the specific constellation of competing forces which shaped imperial state policies. Unlike the Middle East where the militarist-Zionist faction has established hegemony, in Latin America the MNC have played a leading role in directing imperial state policy. In Latin America, the militarists played a lesser role, constrained by (1)the power of the MNC, (2) the shifts in political power in Latin America from right to center-left (3) the impact of economic crises and the commodity boom.

In contrast to the Middle East, the Zionist power configuration has little influence over imperial state policy, as Israel's interests are focused on the Middle East and, with the possible exception of Argentina, Latin America is not a priority.

For over a century and a half, the US MNC and banks dominated and dictated US imperial policy toward Latin America. The US armed forces and CIA were instruments of economic imperialism via direct intervention (invasions), proxy 'military coups', or a combination of both.

US imperial economic power in Latin America ‘peaked’ between 1975-1999. Vassal states and client rulers were imposed via proxy military coups, direct military invasions (Dominican Republic ,Panama and Grenada) and military-civilian controlled elections.

The results were the dismantling of the welfare state and the imposition of neo-liberal policies. The MNC led imperial state and its international financial appendages (IMF, WB, IDB) privatized lucrative strategic economic sectors, dominated trade and projected a regional integration scheme which would codify US imperial dominance.

Imperial economic expansion in Latin America was not simply a result of the internal dynamics and structures of the MNC but depended on (1) the receptivity of the ‘host’ country or more precisely the internal correlation of class forces in Latin America which in turn revolved around (2) the performance of the economy – its growth or susceptibility to crises.

Latin America demonstrates that contingencies such as the demise of client regimes and collaborator classes can have a profound negative impact on the dynamics of imperialism, undermining the power of the imperial state and reversing the economic advance of the MNC.

The advance of US economic imperialism during the 1975-2000 period was manifest in the adoption of neo-liberal policies, the pillage of national resources, the increase of illicit debts and the overseas transfer of billions of dollars. However, the concentration of wealth and property, precipitated a deep socio-economic crises throughout the region which eventually led to the overthrow or ouster of the imperial collaborators in Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Nicaragua. Powerful anti-imperialist social movements especially in the countryside emerged in Brazil and the Andean countries.

Urban unemployed workers movements and public employees unions in Argentina and Uruguay spearheaded electoral changes, bringing to power center-left regimes which 're-negotiated' relations with the US imperial state.

US MNC influence in Latin America waned. They could not count on the full battery of military resources of the imperial state to intervene and re-impose neo-liberal clients because of its military priorities elsewhere: the Middle East, South Asia and North Africa.

Unlike the past, the US MNC in Latin America lacked two essential props of power: the full backing of the US armed forces and powerful civilian-military clients in Latin America.

The US MNC's plan for US centered integration was rejected by the center-left regimes. The imperial state turned to bilateral free trade agreements with Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Panama and Peru. As a result of the economic crises and collapse of most Latin American economies, "neo-liberalism", the ideology of imperial economic penetration, was discredited. Neo-liberal advocates marginalized.

Changes in the world economy had a profound impact on US – Latin America trade and investment relations. The dynamic growth of China and the subsequent boom in demand and the rising prices of commodities, led to a sharp decline of US dominance of Latin American markets.

Latin American states diversified trade, sought and gained new overseas markets, especially in China. The increase in export revenues created greater capacity for self-



financing. The IMF, WB and IDB, economic instruments for leveraging US financial impositions (“conditionality”), were sidelined

The US imperial state faced Latin American regimes who embraced diverse economic options, markets and sources of financing. With powerful domestic popular support and unified civilian-military command, Latin America moved tentatively out of the US sphere of imperialist domination.

The imperial state and its MNC, deeply influenced by their “success” in the 1990’s, responded to the decline of influence by proceeding by ‘trial and error’, in the face of the negative constraints of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The MNC backed policymakers in the imperial state continued to back the collapsing neo-liberal regimes, losing all credibility in Latin America. The imperial-state failed to accommodate changes – deepening popular and center-left regime opposition to “free markets” and the deregulation of banks. No large scale economic aid programs, like President Kennedy’s effort to counter the revolutionary appeal of the Cuban revolution by promoting social reforms via the ‘Alliance for Progress’, were fashioned to win over the center-left, probably because of budget constraints resulting from costly wars elsewhere.

The demise of neo-liberal regimes, the glue that held the different factions of the imperial state together, led to competing proposals of how to regain dominance. The ‘militarist faction’ resorted to and revived the military coup formula for restoration: coups were organized in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Honduras and Paraguay . . . all were defeated, except the latter two. The defeat of US proxies led to the consolidation of the independent, anti-imperialist center-left regimes. Even the “success” of the US coup in

Honduras resulted in a major diplomatic defeat, as every Latin American government condemned it and the US role, further isolating Washington in the region.

The defeat of the militarist strategy strengthened the political-diplomatic faction of the imperial state. With positive overtures toward ostensibly 'center-left regimes', this faction gained diplomatic leverage, retained military ties and deepened the expansion of MNC in Uruguay, Brazil, Chile and Peru. With the latter two countries the economic imperialist faction of the imperial state secured bilateral free trade agreements.

A third MNC – military faction, overlapping with the previous two, combined diplomatic-political accommodations toward Cuba, with an aggressive political destabilization strategy aimed at “regime change” (coup) in Venezuela.

The heterogeneity of imperial state factions and their competing orientations, reflects the complexity of interests engaged in empire building in Latin America and results in seemingly contradictory policies, a phenomenon less evident in the Middle East where the militarist -zionist power configuration dominates imperial policymaking.

For example the promotion of military bases and counter-insurgency operations in Colombia (a priority of the militarist faction) is accompanied by bilateral free market agreements and peace negotiations between the Santos regime and the FARC armed insurgency (a priority of the MNC faction).

Regaining imperial dominance in Argentina involves, (1) promoting the electoral fortunes of the neo-liberal governor of Buenos Aires Macri, (2) backing the pro- imperial media conglomerate , Clarin, facing legislation breaking up its monopoly (3) exploiting the

death of prosecutor and CIA-Mossad collaborator, Alberto Nisman to discredit the Kirchner-Fernandez regime(4)backing NewYork speculators' (vulture)investment fund attempting to extract exorbitant interest payments and, with the aid of a dubious judicial ruling, blocking Argentina's access to financial markets

Both the militarist and MNC factions of the imperial state converge in backing a multi-pronged electoral – and coup approach, which seeks to restore a US controlled neo-liberal regimes to power.

The contingencies which forestalled the recovery of imperial power over the past decade are now acting in reverse. The drop in commodity prices has weakened post neo-liberal regimes in Venezuela, Argentina and Ecuador. The ebbing of anti-imperialist movements resulting from center-left co-optation tactics has strengthened imperial state backed right-wing movements and street demonstrators. The decline in Chinese growth has weakened the Latin American market diversification strategies. The internal balance of class forces has shifted to the Right, toward US backed political clients in Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Paraguay.

### **Theoretical Reflections on Empire Building in Latin America**

US empire building in Latin America is a cyclical process, reflecting the structural shifts in political power, and the restructuring of the world economy – forces and factors which ‘override’ the imperial state and capital's drive to accumulate. Capital accumulation and expansion does not depend merely on the impersonal forces of “the market” – because the social relations under which the “market” functions, operate under the constraints of the class struggle.

The centerpiece of imperial state activities-namely the prolonged territorial wars in the Middle East – are absent in Latin America. The driving force of US imperial state policy is the pursuit of resources (agro-mining), labor power ( low paid autoworkers), markets (size and purchasing power of 600 million consumers). The economic interests of the MNC are the motives for imperial expansion.

Even as, from a geo-strategic vantage point, the Caribbean, Central America as well as South America are located most proximate to the US, economic not military objectives predominate.

However, the militarist-Zionist faction in the imperial state, ignore these traditional economic motives and deliberately choose to act on other priorities – control over oil producing regions, destruction of Islamic nations or movements or simply to destroy anti-imperialist adversaries. The militarists-Zionist faction counted the “benefits” to Israel, its Middle East military supremacy, more important than the US securing economic supremacy in Latin America. This is clearly the case if we measure imperial priorities by state resources expended in pursuit of political goals.

Even if we take the goal of “national security”, interpreted in the broadest sense, of securing the safety of the territorial homeland of the empire, the US military assault of Islamic countries driven by accompanying Islamophobic ideology and the resulting mass killings and uprooting a millions of Islamic people, has led to “blowback”: reciprocal terrorism. US “total wars” against civilians has provoked Islamic assaults against the citizens of the West.

Latin America countries targeted by economic imperialism are less belligerent than Middle Eastern countries targeted by US militarists. A cost/benefits analysis would demonstrate the totally “irrational” nature of militarist strategy. However, if we take account of the specific composition and interests that motivate particularly imperial state policymakers, there is a kind of perverse “rationality”. The militarists defend the “rationality” of costly and unending wars by citing the advantages of seizing the ‘gateways to oil’ and the Zionists cite their success in enhancing Israel’s regional power.

Whereas Latin America, for over a century was a priority region of imperial economic conquest, by the 21<sup>st</sup> century it lost primacy to the Middle East.

### **The Demise of the USSR and China’s conversion to Capitalism**

The greatest impetus to successful US imperial expansion did not take place via proxy wars or military invasions. Rather, the US empire achieved its greatest growth and conquest, with the aid of client political leaders, organizations and vassal states throughout the USSR, Eastern Europe, the Baltic States the Balkans and the Caucasus. Long term, large scale US and EU political penetration and funding succeeded in overthrowing the hegemonic collectivist regimes in Russia and the USSR, and installing vassal states. They would soon serve NATO and be incorporated in the European Union. Bonn annexed East Germany and dominated the markets of Poland, the Czech Republic and other Central European states. US and London bankers collaborated with Russian-Israeli gangster-oligarchs in joint ventures plundering resources, industries, real estate and pension funds. The European Union exploited tens of millions of highly trained scientists, technicians and workers – by importing them or stripping them of their welfare benefits and labor rights and exploiting them as cheap labor reserves in their own country.

“Imperialism by invitation” hosted by the vassal Yeltsin regime, easily appropriated Russian wealth. The ex-Warsaw Pact military forces were incorporated into a foreign legion for US imperial wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Their military installations were converted into military bases and missile sites encircling Russia.

US imperial conquest of the East, created a “unipolar world” in which Washington decision-makers and strategists believed that, as the world’s supreme power, they could intervene in every region with impunity.

The scope and depth of the US world empire was enhanced by China’s embrace of capitalism and its ruler’s invitation to US and EU MNC to enter and exploit cheap Chinese labor. The global expansion of the US empire, led to a sense of unlimited power, encouraging its rulers’ to exercise power against any adversary or competitor.

Between 1990 and 2000, the US expanded its military bases to the borders of Russia. US MNC expanded into China and Indo-China. US backed client regimes throughout Latin America dismantled the national economies, privatizing and denationalizing over five thousand lucrative strategic firms. Every sector was affected- natural resources, transport, telecommunications and finance.

The US proceeded throughout the 1990’s to expand via political penetration and military force. President George H. W. Bush launched a war against Iraq. Clinton bombed Yugoslavia and Germany and the EU joined the US in dividing Yugoslavia into ‘mini states’

### **The Pivotal Year 2000: the Pinnacle and Decline of Empire**

The very rapid and extensive imperial expansion, between 1989-1999, the easy conquests and the accompanying plunder, created the conditions for the decline of the US empire.

The pillage and impoverishment of Russia led to the rise of a new leadership under President Putin intent on reconstructing the state and economy and ending vassalage.

The Chinese leadership harnessed its dependence on the West for capital investments and technology, into instruments for creating a powerful export economy and the growth of a dynamic national public-private manufacturing complex. The imperial centers of finance which flourished under lax regulation crashed. The domestic foundations of empire were severely strained. The imperial war machine competed with the financial sector for federal budgetary expenditures and subsidies.

The easy growth of empire, led to its over-extension. Multiple areas of conflict, reflected world-wide resentment and hostility at the destruction wrought by bombings and invasions. Collaborative imperial client rulers were weakened. The world-wide empire exceeded the capacity of the US to successfully police its new vassal states. The colonial outposts demanded new infusions of troops, arms and funds at a time when countervailing domestic pressures were demanding retrenchment and retreat.

All the recent conquests – outside of Europe – were costly. The sense of invincibility and impunity led imperial planners to overestimate their capacity to expand, retain, control and contain the inevitable anti-imperialist resistance.

The crises and collapse of the neo-liberal vassal states in Latin America accelerated. Anti-imperialist uprisings spread from Venezuela (1999), to Argentina (2001), Ecuador

(2000-2005) and Bolivia (2003-2005). Center-left regimes emerged in Brazil, Uruguay and Honduras. Mass movements, in rural regions, among Indian and mining communities gained momentum. Imperial plans formulated to secure US centered integration were rejected. Instead multiple regional pacts excluding the US proliferated-ALBA, UNASUR, CELAC. Latin America's domestic rebellion coincided with the economic rise of China. A prolonged commodity boom severely weakened US imperial supremacy. The US had few local allies in Latin America and over ambitious commitments to control the Middle East, South Asia and North Africa.

Washington lost its automatic majority in Latin America: its backing of coups in Honduras and Paraguay and its intervention in Venezuela (2002) and blockade of Cuba was repudiated by every regime, even by conservative allies.

Having easily established a global empire, Washington found it was not so easy to defend it. Imperial strategists in Washington viewed the Middle East wars through the prism of the Israeli military priorities, ignoring the global economic interests of the MNC.

Imperial military strategists overestimated the military capacity of vassals and clients, ill-prepared by Washington to rule in countries with growing armed national resistance movements. Wars, invasions and military occupations were launched in multiple sites. Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Syria, Pakistan were added to Afghanistan and Iraq. US imperial state expenditures far exceeded any transfer of wealth from the occupied countries.

A vast civilian – military – mercenary bureaucracy pillaged hundreds of billions of dollars from the US Treasury.

The centrality of wars of conquest, destroyed the economic foundations



and institutional infrastructure necessary for MNC entry and profit.

Once entrenched in strategic military conceptions of empire, the military-political leadership of the imperial state fashioned a global ideology to justify and motivate a policy of permanent and multiple warfare. The doctrine of the ‘war on terror’ justified war everywhere and nowhere. The doctrine was ‘elastic’ – adapted to every region of conflict and inviting new military engagements: Afghanistan, Libya, Iran and Lebanon were all designated as war zones. The ‘terror doctrine’, global in scope, provided a justification for multiple wars and the massive destruction (not exploitation) of societies and economic resources. Above all the “war on terrorism” justified torture (Aba Gharib) and concentration camps (Guantanamo), and civilian targets (via drones) anywhere. Troops were withdrawn and returned to Afghanistan and Iraq as the nationalist resistance advanced.. Thousands of Special Forces in scores of countries were active, purveying death and mayhem.

Moreover, the violent uprooting, degradation and stigmatization of entire islamic people led to the spread of violence in the imperial centers of Paris, New York, London, Madrid and Copenhagen. The globalization of imperial state terror led to individual terror.

Imperial terror evoked domestic terror: the former on a massive, sustained scale encompassing entire civilizations and conducted and justified by elected political officials and military authorities. The latter by a cross section of ‘internationalists’ who directly identified with the victims of imperial state terror.

### **Contemporary Imperialism: Present and Future Perspectives**

To understand the future of US imperialism it is important to sum up and evaluate the experience and policies of the past quarter of a century.

If we compare, US empire building between 1990 and 2015, it is clearly in decline economically, politically and even militarily in most regions of the world, though the process of decline is not linear and probably not irreversible.

Despite talk in Washington of reconfiguring imperial priorities to take account of MNC economic interests, little has been accomplished... Obama's so-called "pivot to Asia" has resulted in new military base agreements with Japan, Australia and the Philippines surrounding China and reflects an inability to fashion free trade agreements that exclude China. Meantime, the US has militarily re-started the war and reentered Iraq and Afghanistan in addition to launching new wars in Syria and the Ukraine. It is clear that the primacy of the militarist faction is still the determinant factor in shaping imperial state policies.

The imperial military drive is most evident in the US intervention in support of the coup in the Ukraine and subsequent financing and arming of the Kiev junta. The imperial takeover of the Ukraine and plans to incorporate it into the EU and NATO, represents military aggression in its most blatant form: The expansion of US military bases and installations and military maneuvers on Russia's borders and the US initiated economic sanctions, have severely damaged EU trade and investment with Russia.. US empire building continues to prioritize military expansion even at the cost of Western imperial economic interests in Europe.

The US-EU bombing of Libya destroyed the burgeoning trade and investment agreements between imperial oil and gas MNC and the Gadhafi government... NATO air assaults destroyed the economy, society and political order, converting Libya into a territory overrun by warring clans, gangs, terrorists and armed thuggery.

Over the past half century, the political leadership and strategies of the imperial state have changed dramatically. During the period between 1975 – 1990, MNC played a central role in defining the direction of imperial state policy: leveraging markets in Asia; negotiating market openings with China; promoting and backing neo-liberal military and civilian regimes in Latin America; installing and financing pro-capitalist regimes in Russia, Eastern Europe, the Baltic and Balkan states. Even in the cases where the imperial state resorted to military intervention, Yugoslavia and Iraq, the bombings led to favorable economic opportunities for US MNC. The Bush Sr regime promoted US oil interests via an oil for food agreement with Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Clinton promoted free market regimes in the mini-states resulting from the break-up of socialist Yugoslavia.

However, the imperial state's leadership and policies shifted dramatically during the late 1990's onward. President Clinton's imperial state was composed of long-standing MNC representatives, Wall Street bankers and newly ascending militarist Zionist officials.

The result was a hybrid policy in which the imperial state actively promoted MNC opportunities under neo-liberal regimes in the ex-Communist countries of Europe and Latin America, and expanded MNC ties with China and Viet Nam while launching destructive military interventions in Somalia, Yugoslavia and Iraq.

The 'balance of forces' within the imperialist state shifted dramatically in favor of the militarist-Zionist faction with 9/11: the terrorist attack of dubious origins and false flag demolitions in New York and Washington served to entrench the militarists in control of a vastly expanded imperial state apparatus. As a consequence of 9/11 the militarist-Zionist

faction of the imperial state subordinated the interests of the MNC to its strategy of total wars. This in turn led to the invasion, occupation and destruction of civilian infrastructure in Iraq and Afghanistan (instead of harnessing it to MNC expansion). The US colonial regime dismantled the Iraqi state (instead of re-ordering it to serve the MNC). The assassination and forced out-migration of millions of skilled professionals, administrators, police and military officials crippled any economic recovery (instead of their incorporation as servants of the colonial state and MNC).

The militarist-Zionist ascendancy in the imperial state introduced major changes in policy, orientation, priorities and the modus operandi of US imperialism. The ideology of the “global war on terror” replaced the MNC doctrine of promoting “economic globalization”.

Perpetual wars (“terrorists” were not confined to place and time) replaced limited wars or interventions directed at opening markets or changing regimes which would implement neo-liberal policies benefiting US MNC.

The locus of imperial state activity shifted from exploiting economic opportunities, in Asia, Latin America and the ex-Communist countries of Eastern Europe to wars in the Middle East, South Asia and North Africa – targeting Moslem countries which opposed Israel’s colonial expansion in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere.

The new militarist – power configuration’s conception of empire building required vast – trillion dollar – expenditures, without care or thought of returns to private capital. In contrast, under the hegemony of the MNC, the imperial state, intervened to secure concessions of oil, gas and minerals in Latin America and the Middle East. The costs of

military conquest were more than compensated by the returns to the MNC. The militarist imperial state configuration pillaged the US Treasury to finance its occupations, financing a vast army of corrupt colonial collaborators, private mercenary ‘military contractors’ and, soon to be millionaire, US military procurement (sic) officials.

Previously, MNC directed overseas exploitation led to healthy returns to the US Treasury both in terms of direct tax payments and via the revenues generated from trade and the processing of raw materials.

Over the past decade and a half, the biggest and most stable returns to the MNC take place in regions and countries where the militarized imperial state is least involved – China, Latin America and Europe. The MNC’s have profited least and have lost most in areas of greatest imperial state involvement.

The ‘war zones’ that extend from Libya, Somalia, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, Iran and Afghanistan and Pakistan are the regions where imperial MNC have suffered the biggest decline and exodus.

The main “beneficiaries” of the current imperial state policies are the war contractors and the security-military-industrial complex in the US. Oversees the state beneficiaries include Israel and Saudi Arabia... In addition Jordanian, Egyptian, Iraqi, Afghani and Pakistani client rulers have squirreled away tens of billions in off-shore private bank accounts.

The “non-state” beneficiaries include mercenary, proxy armies. In Syria, Iraq, Libya, Somalia and the Ukraine, tens of thousands of collaborators in self-styled “non-governmental” organizations have also profited.

## **The Lost-Benefit Calculus or Empire-Building under the Aegeus of the Militarist-Zionist Imperial State**

Sufficient time has passed over the past decade and a half of militarist-Zionist dominance of the imperial state to evaluate their performance.

The US and its Western European allies, especially Germany successfully expanded their empire in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Baltic regions without firing a shot. These countries were converted into EU vassal states. Their markets dominated and industries denationalized. Their armed forces were recruited as NATO mercenaries. West Germany annexed the East. Cheap educated labor, as immigrants and as a labor reserve, increased profits for EU and US MNC. Russia was temporarily reduced to a vassal state between 1991 – 2001. Living standards plunged and welfare programs were reduced. Mortality rates increased. Class inequalities widened. Millionaires and billionaires seized public resources and joined with the imperial MNC in plundering the economy. Socialist and Communist leaders and parties were repressed or co-opted. In contrast imperial military expansion of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, was a costly failure. The ‘war in Afghanistan’ was costly in lives and expenditures and led to an ignominious retreat. What remained was a fragile puppet regime and an unreliable mercenary military. The US-Afghanistan war was the longest war in US history and one of the biggest failures. In the end the nationalist-Islamist resistance movements – the so-called “Taliban” and allied ethno-religious and nationalist anti-imperialist resistance groups- dominate the countryside, repeatedly penetrate and attack urban centers and prepare to take power.

The Iraq war and the imperial state’s invasion and decade long occupation decimated the economy. The occupation fomented ethno religious warfare. The secular

Ba’thist officers and military professionals joined with Islamist-nationalists and subsequently formed a powerful resistance movement (ISIS) which defeated the imperial backed Shia mercenary army during the second decade of the war. The imperial state was condemned to re-enter and engage directly in a prolonged war. The cost of war spiraled to over a trillion dollars. Oil exploitation was hampered and the US Treasury poured tens of billions to sustain a “war without end”.

The US imperial state and the EU, along with Saudi Arabia and Turkey financed armed Islamic mercenary militias to invade Syria and overthrow the secular, nationalist, anti-Zionist Bashar Assad regime. The imperial war opened the door for the expansion of the Islamic –Ba’thist forces—ISIS-- into Syria . The Kurds and other armed groups seized territory, fragmenting the country. After nearly 5 years of warfare and rising military costs the US and EU MNC have been cut off from the Syrian market.

US support for Israeli aggression against Lebanon has led to the growth in power of the anti-imperialist Hezbollah armed resistance. Lebanon, Syria and Iran now represent a serious alternative to the US,EU, Saudi Arabia, Israeli axis.

The US sanctions policy toward Iran has failed to undermine the nationalist regime and has totally undercut the economic opportunities of all the major US and EU oil and gas MNC as well as US manufacturing exporters.China has replaced them

The US-EU invasion of Libya led to the destruction of the economy and the flight of billions in MNC investments and the disruption of exports.

The US imperial states' seizure of power via a proxy coup in Kiev, provoked a powerful anti-imperialist rebellion led by armed militia in the East (Donetsk and Luhansk) and the decimation of the Ukraine economy.

In summary, the military-Zionist takeover of the imperial state has led to prolonged, unwinnable costly wars which have undermined markets and investment sites for US MNC. Imperial militarism has undermined the imperial economic presence and provoked long-term, growing anti-imperialist resistance movements, as well as chaotic, unstable and unviable countries out of imperial control.

Economic imperialism has continued to profit in parts of Europe, Asia , Latin America and Africa despite the imperial wars and economic sanctions pursued by the highly militarized imperial state elsewhere.

However, the US militarists' seizure of power in the Ukraine and the sanctions against Russia have eroded EU'S profitable trade and investments in Russia. The Ukraine under IMF-EU-US tutelage has become a heavily indebted , broken economy run by kleptocrats who are totally dependent on foreign loans and military intervention.

Because the militarized imperial state prioritizes conflict and sanctions with Russia, Iran and Syria, it has failed to deepen and expand its economic ties with Asia, Latin America and Africa. The political and economic conquest of East Europe and parts of the USSR has lost significance. The perpetual, lost wars in the Middle East, North Africa and the Caucuses have weakened the imperial state's capacity for empire building in Asia and Latin America.

The outflow of wealth, the domestic cost of perpetual wars has eroded the electoral foundations of empire building. Only a fundamental change in the composition of the



imperial state and a reorientation of priorities toward centering on economic expansion can alter the current decline of empire. The danger is that as the militarist Zionist imperialist state pursues losing wars, it may escalate and raise the ante ,and move toward a major nuclear confrontation: an empire amidst nuclear ashes!