

Adios US: now China leads the world, says Chavez

By [Global Research](#)

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John Garnaut in Beijing

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MOVE over Washington. Beijing is now the world's geopolitical centre. So said the Venezuelan President, Hugo Chavez, this week on his latest oil-spruiking visit to the Chinese capital.

Mr Chavez also praised China's response to the global financial meltdown that has sent prices of Venezuela's key export, oil, down sharply.

"No one can be ignorant that the centre of gravity of the world has moved to Beijing," Mr Chavez told China's president and Communist Party leader Hu Jintao on Wednesday during his sixth visit to the capital.

"During the financial crisis, China's actions have been highly positive for the world. Currently, China is the biggest motor driving the world amidst this crisis of international capitalism."

Mr Chavez's comments developed a theme he had begun earlier in the week.

On Tuesday night he told reporters: "The unipolar world has collapsed. The power of the US empire has collapsed. Every day, the new poles of world power are becoming stronger. Beijing, Tokyo, Tehran ... it's moving towards the East and towards the South."

Mr Chavez's comments have hit a nerve after last week's G20 economic summit focused world attention on the waning global clout of the United States and the waxing power of China.

But global power status also brings expectations, which China may not have the capacity or willingness to fulfil.

Earlier this week, Western powers were disappointed that China appeared to avoid leveraging its position as the only player capable of prodding or encouraging North Korea back from its latest round of nuclear brinkmanship, following North Korea's launch of a rocket capable of doubling as a ballistic missile.

The spotlight then turned to China's relationship with another member of former president George Bush's "axis of evil", Iran, after a US court indicted a Chinese company and its executive for supplying Iran with missile and nuclear technology.

A New York grand jury indicted the Chinese metals company, LIMMT Economic and Trade Co Ltd, and its manager, Li Fengwei, on 118 counts including suspicion of shipping 15,000 kilograms of specialised aluminum alloy used for long-range missile production from China to Iran.

Barely a day passes in Beijing without a world leader pulling up in their cavalcade at the Great Hall of the People to sign some agreement about energy supply or win-win strategic cooperation.

In recent months China announced or began constructing a gas pipeline from Uzbekistan, an oil pipeline from Kazakhstan and one from Russia, and negotiated multi-billion dollar gas and oil deals with Iran and now Venezuela.

Mr Chavez told Mr Hu he wanted to triple daily oil supplies to China to one million tonnes within five years, part of Venezuela's strategy to diversify oil sales away from the US, which buys about half the South American nation's heavy crude. China and Venezuela will also build four oil tankers and three refineries in China capable of processing Venezuela's heavy, sulphur-laden crude.

"Clearly the trend is towards China becoming a great power, you can make the case that China's already achieved that or at least the status of a regional power," said Denny Roy, a China watcher at the East West Centre in Honolulu.

However Zha Daojiong, professor of international relations at Peking University, says China's power is "probably overblown". He said China was being asked to play in a global system compromised by American moral and strategic contradictions – noting America embracing India despite its failure to sign the non-proliferation treaty and yet listing Iran as a rogue state.

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