

Foundation of the American Empire: Strategic Alliances and “Axes of Evil”

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Global Research, July 21, 2014

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Empires are not easy to sustain given the multiple enemies that they provoke: at the international level (imperial rivals and emerging new powers), at the national level (national resistance movements, unreliable clients and untrustworthy ‘Sepoy’ armies) and at the local level (boycotts, sabotage and strikes). Imperial difficulties are multiplied when an empire is in economic decline, (loss of market shares with growing debt), facing domestic unrest as the economic costs to the taxpayers exceed the returns by a substantial margin; and when the political elite is internally divided between ‘militarists’ and ‘free market’ advocates.

The US Empire today is in the midst of a long-term decline, during which it has suffered a series of costly defeats. In addition, Washington has assumed long-term burdensome commitments to allies who have imposed their own ambitions of seeking ‘mini empires’ (Israel, Turkey and Saudi Arabia).

The US White House has increasingly adopted a military definition of ‘imperial leadership’ at the expense of reconfiguring imperial relations to accommodate potential new political and economic partners.

As the empire slides, the political elite, operating with a highly militarized mind set, has expanded its intrusive global intelligence networks to spy on allies, adversaries and its own citizens. Washington has risked deepening hostilities among key allies (Germany and Brazil), and exacerbating conflicts with conciliatory competitors (Russia), by refusing to curtail its massive espionage. Spying is a clear hostile act and part of the policy of military-driven empire building.

Empires Depend on Alliances

The entire edifice of the US Empire, like the earlier British Empire, is sustained through a series of complex alliances.

US military forces are injected into a country to orient and ensure that local military and police forces efficiently control their population and become available as mercenaries to fight overseas wars for the US Empire.

In the past two centuries, European colonial empires, especially the French and English, invaded and subjugated nations using colonial soldiers of color under the command of European imperial officers.

Today, the US empire builders are making their transition back to the 19th century

colonial model. The Pentagon has been moving from reliance on US ground troops to recruiting colonial troops under US military command.

To that end, Washington's empire has turned toward creating alliances with regional powers to sustain imperial pre-eminence. These 'alliances' are in place in Africa, Latin America, Asia and, in particular, in the Middle East. The Empire's Middle East alliances have been operative for decades, but in recent years, they have absorbed the greatest resources with devastating consequences to the Empire as we shall see.

The Empire today operates and can only be sustained by these alliances or 'axes of regional power', which are therefore worth analyzing in greater detail.

The Axes of Power: The Middle East

The US Empire builders have constructed three regional axes of power in the Middle East. In order of importance, they are: the US-Israeli axis of power, the US-Saudi axis and the US-Turkey axis of power.

The US-Israel axis of power is based on a longstanding agreement. The US militarily and financially supports Israel's colonial expansion into Palestine and Syria, while Israel backs US projections of military and political power throughout the region. Thanks to US military and financial aid, Israel has become the dominant military power in the Middle East and the only nuclear power in the region. The US has used Israel's wars and invasions of its neighbors to secure several Arab collaborator client states (notably Jordan and Egypt). More recently the US-Israeli power axis has been expanded to include the client regime in Kurdistan (northern Iraq). In addition, the US-Israeli axis has been deeply involved in financing and promoting collaborator opposition forces in Lebanon (currently the Hariri political formation), sectors of the armed mercenaries in Syria, Kurdish Peshmerga militias in Iraq and the so-called 'Mujahedeen al Khalq' terrorists in Iran. The US CIA and Israel's Mossad engage in clandestine violent operations directly intervening to destabilize secular and Islamic nationalist regimes like Iran, to disrupt their communications and to assassinate Iranian scientists and leaders. Israel has secured political and intelligence agreements with Egypt and Jordan to isolate and dispossess the Palestinians. The US has secured military bases and operational platforms in Egypt and Jordan to attack Hezbollah in Lebanon, President Bashar al Assad in Syria and the Iranian government.

However, while in the past each country benefited from the US-Israel axis of power, recently it has turned into a costly, asymmetrical relation, a zero-sum game, where Israel's regional power increases as the US Empire deteriorates.

This turn of events is easily understood if one examines the way in which Middle East policy is formulated in the US. Over the past three decades, Israel has constructed the most formidable organized power configuration in the United States that has ever penetrated an imperial state in history. Linked by tribal loyalties and blind obedience, over a half-million Jewish Zionists have embraced Israel's interests and pursued them with a zeal and single-mindedness that is unmatched by any other foreign-based lobby. Prominent Zionists have permeated key state institutions, from the US Treasury, Commerce and the Pentagon, to the White House and the National Security Council. They dominate the US Congress, the 'two party' system, especially the nomination and electoral process, ensuring that only candidates who swear allegiance to Israel are allowed to run and be elected. That way no political debate regarding Israel's subversive influence is permitted. They dominate the

mass media ensuring that all news and commentary is favorable to Israel and all criticism of the Jewish state is excluded.

Here we have the paradox of an imperial ally, Israel colonizing an imperial power and extracting tribute, with foreign aid to Tel Aviv exceeding \$3.6 billion this year. More importantly the Zionist power configuration plays a key role in waging wars against Israel's designated enemies and providing diplomatic cover for the Jewish state's ethnic slaughter of the people of Palestine.

The Israel-US alliance has been set up wholly on Israel's terms. Even as Israel rains thousands of tons of bombs on the captive people of Gaza, to the horror of world public opinion, the White House applauds and the US Congress unanimously approves resolutions supporting Israel's war crimes at the behest of the powerful Zionists ensconced in Washington.

Whatever the US Empire has gained from Israel in the way of intimidating and humiliating Arab leaders in the region it has lost in economic terms. Major oil companies have lost hundreds of billions of dollars in trade and investment from the wars in Iraq, Syria and Libya and from sanctions against Iran. The US domestic economy has lost hundreds of billions of dollars in income and investment as a result of the high cost of oil imports resulting from the wars.

Strategically, the asymmetrical US-Israeli alliance has turned the US into an 'empire' dominated by militarists, and one exclusively focused on the Middle East. This transformation into a 'military-driven' Empire has resulted in neglect, decline and displacement of the imperial influence in the most dynamic growth sectors of the world economy – Asia, Latin America and Russia.

It is a paradox where the lop-sided strength of the US-Israeli axis in the Middle East has profoundly undermined the US global economic and domestic foundations of empire. Moreover, the brutal 'colonial-style wars' in the Middle East promoted by US Zionist strategists in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan have destroyed any possibility of re-constructing viable client states and markets out of these conquered nations. Israeli military strategists have long wanted these regimes destroyed, their state institutions dismantled and their societies embroiled in sectarian, tribal strife. As a result, the US wars have not produced a single functioning client state: the US military invaded, occupied and destroyed Iraq and Afghanistan while losing the wars in political terms. This came at no cost to Israel, the unchallenged regional hegemon, while the US Treasury will struggle with a trillion dollar price tag and the US public will experience economic decline for generations.

The US-Saudi Axis of Power

The second most important axis of power in the Middle East is the US-Saudi alliance. From the perspective of the US Empire, the Saudi connection has many advantages, as well as costs. Saudi financing, in collaboration with the US, was instrumental in recruiting, arming and financing the Islamist guerrillas, which overthrew the secular pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan. Saudi links to the Pakistani intelligence services and military has ensured Pakistan will remain a client-state of the US Empire. Saudi intervention in Yemen and Bahrain propped-up the pro-empire, anti-democratic puppet regimes while ensuring US access to its strategic military bases.

Saudi Arabia is the principle backer of US sanctions and confrontation with Iran. It provides air bases, military intelligence operations and the funding of anti-Iranian terrorists, like 'Mujahedeen al Khalq'. Saudi Arabia is the biggest market for US military exports. Saudi increased its oil output to compensate for a decline of oil in world markets due to the US embargo against and the destruction of oil production following the US attacks and devastation of Iraq and Libya. In exchange Saudi Arabia's absolutist monarchy obtains US protection, security and assistance in repressing its domestic unrest. Saudi billionaires, no matter how brutal and corrupt, have full access to lucrative financial markets in the US. The Saudi theocratic-monarchic dictatorship has clearly benefited from the US destruction of secular nationalist Arab regimes in the region. Indeed, secular nationalism has been the Saudi's primary target since its monarchy was set up by the British.

Nevertheless, the Saudi-US axis is fraught with tensions. The Saudi regime actively promotes Sunni extremist jihadi movements in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon undermining Washington-backed neo-liberal clients. The Saudi-backed terrorists in Libya have destabilized the US proxies. The Saudis promoted and financed the bloody military coup in Egypt of General Sisi. The Saudi Royals support the brutal military overthrow of the elected President Morsi and the suppression of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood because of Morsi's rapprochement with Iran. This has ruined Obama's more 'moderate' goal of setting up a Muslim Brotherhood-Egyptian military power sharing arrangement in Cairo.

In other words, the US and Saudi axis converge in opposition to secular-nationalist regimes but diverge on the alternatives. The Saudis tend to choose the most retrograde Islamic extremist groups excluding and antagonizing all other tendencies, from conservative-secular neo-liberals to democratic, nationalist and socialist parties and movements. They end up with political polarizations unfavorable to US long-term imperial interests. The Saudi choice of political alternatives tends to be minorities incapable of sustaining or overtly hostile to the US imperial order. Moreover, Saudi Arabia opposes Israel on religious grounds, the principle US political partner in the region, even as it works with the Jewish state against the secular or nationalist governments Syria, Iran and Lebanon.

Like its alliance with Israel, the US-Saudi axis comes at a very high cost. Saudi financing of the Taliban and other Islamic groups has cost the US empire builders hundreds of billions of dollars, thousands of military casualties and a humiliating retreat after a thirteen year war.

Saudi funding for Sunni terrorists in Syria has decimated US-backed neo-liberal armed groups. Equally damaging, the same Saudi-backed jihadi groups have severely destabilized the US-imposed Maliki regime in Iraq. Saudi attacks on the US-Iranian nuclear negotiations have strengthened the Zionist-led opposition in the US Congress.

In other words the US-Saudi axis has buttressed the US Empire in the short-run, but has become a strategic liability. Saudi's overseas projection of its most reactionary internal politics undermines the US effort to create stable imperial clients. Not to be overlooked is the Saudi role in financing Al Qaeda and its operatives in the attack on the US on September 11, 2001.

The US Turkey Axis

Turkey has been a major US-NATO asset especially during the Cold War. The secular-military regimes in Ankara mobilized the largest number of combat troops on the

USSR's border and provided the US with numerous air bases and intelligence centers. In recent times, under an Islamist regime, Turkey has become the axis for the US and EU-backed mercenary invasion of Syria, providing military sanctuaries, training, arms and financing to overthrow the secular Baathist regime in Damascus.

The Erdogan regime has sought to regain a pivotal role within NATO by backing the Empire's effort to topple nationalist leaders and movements in the region.

Turkey has worked closely with the US and Israel in building up the political, economic and military capacities of the Iraqi Kurds. They are seen as a counter-force to the Saudi-backed jihadis, the failed Shia regime in Baghdad and Iraqi petrol-nationalists.

While pursuing neo-liberal policies congruent with US imperial design and collaborating with Washington's clients in 'Kurdistan', Turkey has its own regional ambitions. President Erdogan supported the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt and opposed the military coup of General Sisi, fearing, perhaps, a similar coup by the Turkish military. Up until quite recently Turkey had its own 'mini-imperial' agenda via trade and investment in Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan and Afghanistan. The recent imperial conflicts and regional instability have undermined Erdogan's dreams of a neo-Ottoman revival. 95% of Turkish public opinion supports the rights of the Palestinian people; this has forced Erdogan to pull away from the Israeli-US axis, at least temporarily. Likewise the Turkish regime, while not in opposition to the Saudi dictatorship, has refrained from overt collaboration apart from trade and Gulf investments.

With the US-EU in the process of isolating and demonizing Russia, it remains to be seen whether Turkey will once again become the military axis for NATO. Russia is an important energy supplier and market for Turkish goods. If Turkey decides to join the new US axis confronting Russia, it will lose out economically and will have to find alternative markets and energy sources in an increasingly unstable region. A weakened Turkey may be more submissive to empire but it will be more vulnerable to internal opposition.

Conclusion

The US Empire, like previous ones, depends on a host of alliances and axes of power to sustain it and compensate for military, political and economic limitations in resources and personnel. With regard to the main region of direct US involvement, the Middle East, Washington has embraced three sets of alliances with partners who have played a paradoxical role in both sustaining and eroding the US Empire.

Israel, the primary ally of the US, is largely a political and military construct of US policymakers over the past years. It was originally designed to serve and police the region for the US. Instead, over the years, the relationship has been totally reversed: US imperial power has been subordinated to serve Israel's ambitions to impose unchallenged regional superiority over the Middle East. For the first time in the history of empires, a satrap of empire has systematically penetrated the principle imperial institutions. Decision-makers and elites loyal to Israeli interests have expended vast amounts of US military resources and American soldiers to wage wars with the goal of decimating Israel's enemies. Five hundred thousand well organized and financed American Jewish-Zionist activists have directed the global empire into focusing on one region: the Middle East. The mass media, US Congress and the principle advisory bodies (dubbed 'think tanks') in Washington are engaged in formulating US policies in line with Israel's colonial interests with disastrous consequences

for the American people. In effect, the US state and society are 'colonized' by unconditional supporters of Israel. The Zionist power configuration's influence finds its most macabre expression in the US Congress unanimous endorsement of the Israeli slaughter of hundreds of trapped Palestinian civilians and children during the July 2014 terror bombing of Gaza. This repugnant act is the culmination of the forced servility of an ostensibly global imperial power subject to the dictates of its lawless, genocidal ally.

The Israeli-US axis has led the Empire into a blind ally: A totally one-sided relation has inflated the military dimensions of empire in Israel's interests. Economically, this has become the most perverse of all imperial partnerships, where the satrap extracts billions of dollars a year in political tribute and advanced weaponry in return for nothing! Strategically, the global decline of the US Empire, its loss of market shares and political influence in the most dynamic regions of Asia, Latin America and Africa, can be wholly attributed to its sustained focus on the Middle East.

The disastrous 'exclusive Middle East focus' can be attributed to the leadership, organization and policies of the Empire.

The US political leadership, beholden to unconditional supporters of Israel, has committed the most damaging policies in US history. First and foremost, these elite-educated policymakers have degraded the entire economic dimensions of empire by pursuing a relentless military agenda – destroying oil producers, raising world prices, sowing instability and by bleeding the US Treasury of trillions of dollars – with few returns.

This self-proclaimed 'best and brightest', with advanced degrees from the most prestigious universities, includes policymakers who have committed the US to endless wars which only benefit Israel. Most of these key policymakers, including Wolfowitz, Emmanuel, Feith, Libby, Abrams, Greenspan, Levy, Cohen, Frohman, Lew, Fischer, Bernanke and Yellen have deliberately pillaged the US Treasury in order to sustain Middle East wars for Israel and Wall Street bankers. The 'leading lights' among the Zionist policy-makers, occupying influential positions in the imperial power structures, are responsible for an unmitigated disaster: they have initiated failed wars, dismantled whole societies, fomented financial crises and promoted a one-way 'partnership' with a genocidal state. If only they had pursued respectable and successful careers as dentists, doctors, investors, bankers or ivory tower academics – millions of precious lives would not have been destroyed....

However, it is not only the empire's alliance with Israel which is driving the empire to crisis. The Saudi-US axis has given immense power to the most retrograde satraps and barbaric armed insurgents running amok in Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. An empire, associated with the most parasitic Arab 'rentiers' who send their own fanatical offspring to self-immolate for a head-beheading new world order has scarce resonance in the modern world.

An empire, organized around axes of evil and directed by political leaders loyal to satraps, has no material or moral foundations to justify its existence.

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