

The Politics of Military Ascendancy

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Introduction

Clearly the US has escalated the pivotal role of the military in the making of foreign and, by extension, domestic policy. The rise of 'the Generals' to strategic positions in the Trump regime is evident, deepening its role as a highly autonomous force determining US strategic policy agendas.

In this paper we will discuss the advantages that the military elite accumulate from the war agenda and the reasons why 'the Generals' have been able to impose their definition of international realities.

We will discuss the military's ascendancy over Trump's civilian regime as a result of the relentless degradation of his presidency by his political opposition.

The Prelude to Militarization: Obama's Multi-War Strategy and Its Aftermath

The central role of the military in deciding US foreign policy has its roots in the strategic decisions taken during the Obama-Clinton Presidency. Several policies were decisive in the rise of unprecedented military-political power.

1. The massive increase of US troops in Afghanistan and their subsequent failures and retreat weakened the Obama-Clinton regime and increased animosity between the military and the Obama's Administration. As a result of his failures, Obama downgraded the military and weakened Presidential authority.
2. The massive US-led bombing and destruction of Libya, the overthrow of the Gadhafi government and the failure of the Obama-Clinton administration to impose a puppet regime, underlined the limitations of US air power and the ineffectiveness of US political-military intervention. The Presidency blundered in its foreign policy in North Africa and demonstrated its military ineptness.
3. The invasion of Syria by US-funded mercenaries and terrorists committed the US to an unreliable ally in a losing war. This led to a reduction in the military budget and encouraged the Generals to view their direct control of overseas wars and foreign policy as the only guarantee of their positions.
4. The US military intervention in Iraq was only a secondary contributing factor in the defeat of ISIS; the major actors and beneficiaries were Iran and the allied Iraqi Shia militias.
5. The Obama-Clinton engineered coup and power grab in the Ukraine brought a corrupt

incompetent military junta to power in Kiev and provoked the secession of the Crimea (to Russia) and Eastern Ukraine (allied with Russia). The Generals were sidelined and found that they had tied themselves to Ukrainian kleptocrats while dangerously increasing political tensions with Russia. The Obama regime dictated economic sanctions against Moscow, designed to compensate for their ignominious military-political failures.

The Obama-Clinton legacy facing Trump was built around a three-legged stool: an international order based on military aggression and confrontation with Russia; a '*pivot to Asia*' defined as the military encirclement and economic isolation of China – via bellicose threats and economic sanctions against North Korea; and the use of the military as the praetorian guards of free trade agreements in Asia excluding China.

The Obama 'legacy' consists of an international order of globalized capital and multiple wars. The continuity of Obama's 'glorious legacy' initially depended on the election of Hillary Clinton.

Donald Trump's presidential campaign, for its part, promised to dismantle or drastically revise the Obama Doctrine of an international order based on multiple wars, neo-colonial 'nation' building and free trade. A furious Obama 'informed' (threatened) the newly-elected President Trump that he would face the combined hostility of the entire State apparatus, Wall Street and the mass media if he proceeded to fulfill his election promises of economic nationalism and thus undermine the US-centered global order.

Trump's bid to shift from Obama's sanctions and military confrontation to economic reconciliation with Russia was countered by a hornet's nest of accusations about a Trump-Russian electoral conspiracy, darkly hinting at treason and show trials against his close allies and even family members.

The concoction of a Trump-Russia plot was only the first step toward a total war on the new president, but it succeeded in undermining Trump's economic nationalist agenda and his efforts to change Obama's global order.

Trump Under Obama's International Order

After only 8 months in office President Trump helplessly gave into the firings, resignations and humiliation of each and every one of his civilian appointees, especially those who were committed to reverse Obama's 'international order'.

Trump was elected to replace wars, sanctions and interventions with economic deals beneficial to the American working and middle class. This would include withdrawing the military from its long-term commitments to budget-busting 'nation-building' (occupation) in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and other Obama-designated endless war zones.

Trump's military priorities were supposed to focus on strengthening domestic frontiers and overseas markets. He started by demanding that NATO partners pay for their own military defense responsibilities. Obama's globalists in both political parties were aghast that the US might lose its overwhelming control of NATO; they united and moved immediately to strip Trump of his economic nationalist allies and their programs.

Trump quickly capitulated and fell into line with Obama's international order, except for one proviso – he would select the Cabinet to implement the old/new international order.



General James Mattis

A hamstrung Trump chose a military cohort of Generals, led by General James Mattis (famously nicknamed '*Mad Dog*') as Defense Secretary.

The *Generals* effectively took over the Presidency. Trump abdicated his responsibilities as President.

General Mattis: The Militarization of America

General Mattis took up the Obama legacy of global militarization and added his own nuances, including the 'psychological-warfare' embedded in Trump's emotional ejaculations on 'Twitter'.

The '*Mattis Doctrine*' combined high-risk threats with aggressive provocations, bringing the US (and the world) to the brink of nuclear war.

General Mattis has adopted the targets and fields of operations, defined by the previous Obama administration as it has sought to re-enforce the existing imperialist international order.

The junta's policies relied on provocations and threats against Russia, with expanded economic sanctions. Mattis threw more fuel on the US mass media's already hysterical anti-Russian bonfire. The General promoted a strategy of low intensity *diplomatic thuggery*, including the unprecedented seizure and invasion of Russian diplomatic offices and the short-notice expulsion of diplomats and consular staff.

These military threats and acts of diplomatic intimidation signified that the Generals' Administration under the Puppet President Trump was ready to sunder diplomatic relations with a major world nuclear power and indeed push the world to direct nuclear confrontation.

What Mattis seeks in these mad fits of aggression is nothing less than capitulation on the part of the Russian government regarding long held US military objectives – namely the partition of Syria (which started under Obama), harsh starvation sanctions on North Korea (which began under Clinton) and the disarmament of Iran (Tel Aviv's main goal) in preparation for its dismemberment.

The Mattis junta occupying the Trump White House heightened its threats against a North Korea, which (in Vladimir Putin's words) '*would rather eat grass than disarm*'. The US mass

media-military megaphones portrayed the North Korean victims of US sanctions and provocations as an 'existential' threat to the US mainland.

Sanctions have intensified. The stationing of nuclear weapons on South Korea is being pushed. Massive joint military exercises are planned and ongoing in the air, sea and land around North Korea. Mattis twisted Chinese arms (mainly business comprador-linked bureaucrats) and secured their UN Security Council vote on increased sanctions. Russia joined the Mattis-led anti-Pyongyang chorus, even as Putin warned of sanctions ineffectiveness! (As if General 'Mad Dog' Mattis would ever take Putin's advice seriously, especially after Russia voted for the sanctions!)

Mattis further militarized the Persian Gulf, following Obama's policy of partial sanctions and bellicose provocation against Iran.

When he worked for Obama, Mattis increased US arms shipments to the US's Syrian terrorists and Ukrainian puppets, ensuring the US would be able to scuttle any '*negotiated settlements*'.

Militarization: An Evaluation



Trump's resort to '*his Generals*' is supposed to counter any attacks from members of his own party and Congressional Democrats about his foreign policy. Trump's appointment of 'Mad Dog' Mattis, a notorious Russophobe and warmonger, has somewhat pacified the opposition in Congress and undercut any 'finding' of an election conspiracy between Trump and Moscow dug up by the Special Investigator Robert Mueller. Trump maintains a role as nominal President by adapting to what Obama warned him was '*their international order*' - now directed by an unelected military junta composed of Obama holdovers!

Special Investigator Robert Mueller

The Generals provide a veneer of legitimacy to the Trump regime (especially for the warmongering Obama Democrats and the mass media). However, handing presidential powers over to 'Mad Dog' Mattis and his cohort will come with a heavy price.

While the military junta may protect Trump's foreign policy flank, it does not lessen the attacks on his domestic agenda. Moreover, Trump's proposed budget compromise with the Democrats has enraged his own Party's leaders.

In sum, under a weakened President Trump, the militarization of the White House benefits the military junta and enlarges their power. The 'Mad Dog' Mattis program has had mixed results, at least in its initial phase: The junta's threats to launch a pre-emptive (possibly

nuclear) war against North Korea have strengthened Pyongyang's commitment to develop and refine its long and medium range ballistic missile capability and nuclear weapons. Brinksmanship failed to intimidate North Korea. Mattis cannot impose the Clinton-Bush-Obama doctrine of disarming countries (like Libya and Iraq) of their advanced defensive weapons systems as a prelude to a US 'regime change' invasion.

Any US attack against North Korea will lead to massive retaliatory strikes costing tens of thousands of US military lives and will kill and maim millions of civilians in South Korea and Japan.

At most, '*Mad Dog*' managed to intimidate Chinese and Russian officials (and their export business billionaire buddies) to agree to more economic sanctions against North Korea. Mattis and his allies in the UN and White House, the loony Nikki Haley and a miniaturized President Trump, may bellow war – yet they cannot apply the so-called 'military option' without threatening the US military forces stationed throughout the Asia Pacific region.

The *Mad Dog* Mattis assault on the Russian embassy did not materially weaken Russia, but it has revealed the uselessness of Moscow's conciliatory diplomacy toward their so-called 'partners' in the Trump regime.

The end-result might lead to a formal break in diplomatic ties, which would increase the danger of a military confrontation and a global nuclear holocaust.

The military junta is pressuring China against North Korea with the goal of isolating the ruling regime in Pyongyang and increasing the US military encirclement of Beijing. *Mad Dog* has partially succeeded in turning China against North Korea while securing its advanced THAAD anti-missile installations in South Korea, which will be directed against Beijing. These are Mattis' short-term gains over the excessively pliant Chinese bureaucrats. However, if *Mad Dog* intensifies direct military threats against China, Beijing can retaliate by dumping tens of billions of US Treasury notes, cutting trade ties, sowing chaos in the US economy and setting Wall Street against the Pentagon.

Mad Dog's military build-up, especially in Afghanistan and in the Middle East, will not intimidate Iran nor add to any military successes. They entail high costs and low returns, as Obama realized after the better part of a decade of his defeats, fiascos and multi-billion dollar losses.

Conclusion

The militarization of US foreign policy, the establishment of a military junta within the Trump Administration, and the resort to nuclear brinksmanship has not changed the global balance of power.

Domestically Trump's nominal Presidency relies on militarists, like General Mattis. Mattis has tightened the US control over NATO allies, and even rounded up stray European outliers, like Sweden, to join in a military crusade against Russia. Mattis has played on the media's passion for bellicose headlines and its adulation of Four Star Generals.

But for all that – North Korea remains undaunted because it can retaliate. Russia has thousands of nuclear weapons and remains a counterweight to a US-dominated globe. China owns the US Treasury and is unimpressed, despite the presence of an increasingly collision-prone US Navy swarming throughout the South China Sea.

Mad Dog laps up the media attention, with well dressed, scrupulously manicured journalists hanging on his every bloodthirsty pronouncement. War contractors flock to him, like flies to carrion. The Four Star General 'Mad Dog' Mattis has attained Presidential status without winning any election victory (fake or otherwise). No doubt when he steps down, Mattis will be the most eagerly courted board member or senior consultant for giant military contractors in US history, receiving lucrative fees for half hour 'pep-talks' and ensuring the fat perks of nepotism for his family's next three generations. *Mad Dog* may even run for office, as Senator or even President for whatever Party.

The militarization of US foreign policy provides some important lessons:

First of all, the escalation from threats to war does not succeed in disarming adversaries who possess the capacity to retaliate. Intimidation via sanctions can succeed in imposing significant economic pain on oil export-dependent regimes, but not on hardened, self-sufficient or highly diversified economies.

Low intensity multi-lateral war maneuvers reinforce US-led alliances, but they also convince opponents to increase their military preparedness. Mid-level intense wars against non-nuclear adversaries can seize capital cities, as in Iraq, but the occupier faces long-term costly wars of attrition that can undermine military morale, provoke domestic unrest and heighten budget deficits. And they create millions of refugees.

High intensity military brinksmanship carries major risk of massive losses in lives, allies, territory and piles of radiated ashes – a pyrrhic victory!

In sum:

Threats and intimidation succeed only against conciliatory adversaries. Undiplomatic verbal thuggery can arouse the spirit of the bully and some of its allies, but it has little chance of convincing its adversaries to capitulate. The US policy of worldwide militarization over-extends the US armed forces and has not led to any permanent military gains.

Are there any voices among clear-thinking US military leaders, those not bedazzled by their stars and idiotic admirers in the US media, who could push for more global accommodation and mutual respect among nations? The US Congress and the corrupt media are demonstrably incapable of evaluating past disasters, let alone forging an effective response to new global realities.

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