



THE END OF THE UNIPOLAR MOMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICA AS THE GLOBAL HEGEMONY OF THE US DECLINES

The global hegemony of the US – also known as *Pax Americana* – emerged from the ruins of WW2 and has been central to the notion of the ‘Free World’ or alternatively, the ‘Collective West’. American global leadership was further augmented by the demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) – a peer rival power – and the subsequent collapse of the Cold War, giving rise to the unipolar moment where the US became the sole remaining superpower in the world. It is this brief unipolar moment defining US global leadership that is being challenged by the emergence of alternative centres of power such as China, Russia and India, to name but a few. This tectonic geopolitical shift gives rise to a global environment characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. In trying to postpone its inevitable decline, the US increasingly operates outside of norms of international law by embarking on a spree of illegal land grabs, unilateral maritime blockades, sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction to depose legitimate governments unfavourable to US interests. The acute geopolitical tensions that emanate from this kind of behaviour on the world stage have serious implications for Africa. The continent is required to maintain an intricate balance as it navigates the existing global politico-economic turbulence. The core continental interests as contained in the Agenda 2063 Vision and the seven aspirations (African Union Commission, 2015) should guide Africa and facilitate constant recalibration of responses to the geopolitical rivalry among big powers. It is noteworthy that it is in the orchestrated conflicts and proxy wars where the decline of the US imperial power unquestionably manifests itself more, especially in the critical area that matters most – the military sphere. .

US MILITARY AS THE GREATEST THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN

In his remarks at the 2015 UN General Assembly meeting, President Barack Obama referred to the US military as ‘the strongest the world has ever seen’ (The White House: Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). With this bold assertion, President Obama was repeating words spoken on various platforms by former American presidents, members of Congress and military experts such as General (ret) David Patraeus. For instance, in a 2016 article he co-authored for the Brookings Institute titled ‘America’s awesome military’, General Patraeus stated that the US has by far the best military in the world with very few weaknesses, if any. He proceeded to mention that, unlike its rivals, the US has a huge budget and it accounts for about one-third of world military expenditure; and it has the largest navy in the world which provides the country with enormous force projection capabilities. He further indicated that



the US military is in a league of its own in terms of possessing technologically advanced equipment operated by highly trained soldiers.

The US has over 750 military bases in about 80 countries worldwide and there is no doubt that America is indeed a great power (Overseas Base Realignment and Closure Coalition, 2025). Its power and influence is also enhanced by the NATO military alliance, which America leads and contributes significantly in world total military expenditure (Gen Patreaus & E, 2016). However, there have been laments lately about the inability of the US military to win wars or conflicts that it has been involved in. During his 2024 campaign leading to his victory in the US Presidential elections Pres Trump often expressed this frustration, which has been amplified by none other than Vice President JD Vance during an interview with CBS News (RT World News, 2025) where he highlighted the need for major overhaul of the US army and how it conducts wars.

US MILITARY HAS LOST THE TECHNOLOGICAL EDGE

On the 1 March 2018, in his annual state of the nation address, Pres Putin of the Russian Federation unveiled a series of new weapon systems, which include hypersonic missiles flying at speeds approaching Mach 10 and beyond, with some powered by miniature nuclear propulsion. The President highlighted that some of the new missile systems have unlimited ranges and can strike targets anywhere in the world (The President's Office, 2018). While at first the announcement was dismissed as 'Putin's bluff', the collective West was left unable to form a coherent response to the announcement after it became clear that Pres Putin was not bluffing. Since then, the Russian Federation became the first country to operationally deploy this new category of weapons, which had no equal in the world and no countermeasures to protect against. In a single stroke, the billions of dollars of investment into large aircraft carrier fleet and naval battle groups by the US were rendered obsolete by Pres Putin's announcement.

According to Andrei Martianov, a Russo-American military expert, high-precision hypersonic missile systems, which include anti-ship variants for anti-access and area denial at sea (A2/AD), fired at enormous distances, have created a serious challenge for the US naval Combat Battle Group (CBG) to approach, with hostile intent, the shores of Russia or any other country in possession of these weapons. The costs of such military adventure by the US, or any western country, would be too ghastly to contemplate.

To date, Russia, China, Iran and North Korea have constituted themselves into what may be termed the 'hypersonic elite class', by each unveiling their respective weapon systems in this category while the entire collective West has been lagging behind. The US has suffered



a series of setbacks and it is still in the “research and testing phase” of developing own the hypersonic missile system, with the army’s Blackbeard Ground Launched system years away from operational deployment (Encarnacion, 2025). Meanwhile, the Russians have cemented their leadership in the US-initiated arms race by further putting into operational duty systems such as the Oreshnik, a hypersonic missile system with MIRV capability; the S500 air defence system capable of destroying hypersonic missiles, ballistic missiles and near-orbit satellites; they have also unveiled the Poseidon, an unmanned nuclear-propelled underwater torpedo capable of colossal destruction of coastline infrastructure or causing a radio-active tsunami in coastal cities in the event of a conflict. In response to those Western experts and military pundits who grudgingly admit military technological parity or near-parity between Russia and America, Martianov forcefully asserts that “There is no parity between Russia and the United States in such fields as air-defence, hypersonic weapons and, in general, missile development, to name just a few fields—the United States lags behind in these fields, not just in years but in generations” (Martianov, 2019).

CONFLICTS THAT PORTEND FURTHER DECLINE OF US MILITARY HEGEMONY

A few contemporary conflicts involving the US directly or by proxy have put into question that bold assertion of American global military superiority:

The Russia/Ukraine Conflict

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the US subsequently adopted a Defence Planning Guidance 1994 – 1999, spearheaded by the Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, which in subsequent years became known as the Wolfowitz Doctrine. The essential elements of the Doctrine were to ensure US global dominance in all major regions by using superior American military power to contain and prevent the rise of rival powers to the American hegemony. To execute this policy effectively, the US had to substantially increase defence spending and establish a global network of military bases or Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) for effective force projection and employment. Wolfowitz later became a member of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), a conservative think tank that advocated for America to become the planetary hegemon of the century.

The US provocative behaviour on the global stage and NATO expansion towards the Russian borders need to be understood in the context of the Wolfowitz Doctrine and the PNAC. President Putin’s launch of the Special Military Operation (SMO) against Ukraine in 2022 was to hold in check the unending eastern expansion of NATO made in violation of promises earlier made by the West not to move the military alliance ‘an inch to the east’. The aim of the West was made clear that it is to contain and inflict a “strategic defeat” against the



Russian Federation, thus ensuring that it never rises to challenge the US global hegemony. To achieve this, a combination of unprecedented economic and financial sanctions, totalling more than 30 000 in all, were imposed upon Russia and in addition, expert military advice, intelligence and military equipment worth billions were provided to Ukraine to fight the Russians. A coordinated global diplomatic offensive was initiated to ensure the isolation of the Russian Federation from world institutions, including the UN, for what the West framed as “an unprovoked aggression against the sovereignty of Ukraine”.

As the Western narrative of Russia’s “unprovoked aggression against Ukraine” began to collapse, more and more western officials began admitting that the Russo-Ukraine conflict is essentially a NATO proxy war against Russia. The latest among these officials to make such an admission is none other than Gen Keith Kellogg, former President Trump’s peace envoy to Ukraine. With its 31 members, including 21 other nations under the umbrella of “Friends of the Ukraine”, the entire 52 countries put their lot behind the strategic objective of defeating Russia and breaking it up into smaller portions to be easily controlled and its immense energy and mineral resources plundered and shared among themselves. In spite of this immense pressure, under Pres Putin’s leadership, Russia managed to adapt to the circumstances, and demonstrated superior strategic and operational planning, and the continuing war has developed in Russia’s favour. Thousands of various types of Western military hardware consisting of Tanks, APCs/IFVs, Armoured Vehicles, Artillery Pieces, MRLS, UAVs, Planes and Helicopters have been destroyed and/or captured by the Russians, including personnel losses in excess of 1.5 million Ukrainian Armed Forces and western mercenaries KIA/MIA as of 13 January 2026 (Martianov, Warfare Myths, 2026). This has prompted the Russian President to remark that the poor performance of Western military equipment in real battle conditions shows that, contrary to widely held notions, the technological superiority of western military equipment has been over-stated. Amplifying on President Putin’s assertion, former Minister of Defence General Sergei Shoigu proclaimed that the Western Military Hegemony has been shattered (Intel Drop, 2023).

In the latest signal that indicates a stated policy departure from the previous Biden Administration, the 2025 US national security strategy released by the White House highlights as its “core interest” the “recreation of strategic stability with Russia”. The document refrains from mentioning Russia or President Putin as an adversary, threat, or enemy of the US (Rod, 2025). Given that the Ukraine proxy war against Russia was initiated and driven by the US itself (The Moscow Times, 2025), taking along its European vassals that are currently proving unable to change course and embrace peace this new stance of the US may be construed as an admission of failure of to inflict a “strategic defeat of Russia” by proxy, as articulated among others by Julianne Smith, the former US Permanent



Representative to NATO (Gijs & Roberts, 2022), . The logic of the battlefield dynamics looks set to determine the outcome of the diplomatic efforts to end the conflict, and not the other way round. This seems unavoidable in spite of the US trying hard to pretend playing the role of a mediator in a conflict it has initiated in the first place.

Afghanistan – the graveyard of empires

Shortly after 9/11, as part of the Global War on Terror, the US invaded Afghanistan in 2001, a country known as the graveyard of empires (Shrivastava, 2025), in order to depose the Taliban-led Islamic Government and ensure that al-Qaeda and other terrorist organisations do not continue to use the territory of the country to launch attacks against the US and its allies. After what became known as America’s longest war, the Biden Administration wound up the war started by Pres Bush and withdrew US and NATO forces in 2021. As reflected in the Afghan Papers and other sources closer to the war effort, the costs of the intervention have been enormous for the American tax payer. In the 20 years that the US and NATO allies spent fighting terror in Afghanistan, it is estimated that in excess of 2 trillion US dollars were spent, and millions worth of advanced military equipment fell in the hands of the Taliban forces in what the entire world witnessed as the chaotic withdrawal of the US military from battle. It is estimated that the US suffered casualties amounting to 6 379, which consisted of both military and civilian Defence Contractor (PMSCs) deaths and 20 770 military wounded. Further estimations put the deaths of allied nations, presumably NATO, to 1 144, 69 000 Afghan military and police including scores of aid workers and journalists (A-Mark Foundation, 2022). In an internal memo to direct the establishment of a Special Review Panel (SRP) on the withdrawal, the Office of the Secretary for Defence characterized the withdrawal from Afghanistan as a “catastrophic event” and “one of America’s darkest and deadliest international moments”. The chaotic withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan, serves to indicate the limits of the “most powerful military the world has ever known” to impose itself and subdue a less developed people determined to preserve their sovereignty, territorial integrity and national pride against a foreign imperial power. Afghanistan, it would seem, lived up to its reputation as the ‘graveyard of empires’.

Yemen/the Houthi blockade of the Red Sea

The Houthis are a political and religious group that is in control of the Yemeni capital of Sanaa and the north-western parts of the country, including the Red Sea coastline. The country has been in the grip of a devastating civil war that has cost the country thousands of



lives and thousands more displaced people. The military intervention of the US supported Saudi-led coalition has resulted into hunger and famine of catastrophic proportions (Mishra, 2025). In spite of these enormous challenges, the Houthis responded to the Israeli military

bombardments against occupied Palestinian lands by instituting the blockade of the Red Sea against vessels destined for Israeli ports. They declared that the blockade carried out in solidarity with the Palestinians will continue for as long as long as Israeli bombardments against defenceless Palestinians continue.

The first Houthi attack on maritime traffic took place in November 2023 and since then; scores of merchant ships and tankers linked to Israel have been attacked with a variety of weapons including Antiship Cruise and Ballistic Missiles and drones. In 2024/5, the US assembled a loose 'Coalition of the Willing' to enforce what they call freedom of navigation and ensure the safety of commercial vessels. Americans and their British counterparts bombarded Houthi positions and military infrastructure in Yemen with the aim to degrade Houthi offensive capabilities. To date, the bombardments have been largely ineffective as the attacks in the strategic naval chokepoints of the Gulf of Aden, through the Strait of Bab Al Mandeb to the Red Sea continued unabated. In a rare instance of admitting failure of exerting military pressure, the US had to initiate 'peace negotiations' with the Houthis to ensure a ceasefire, which lasted only for a brief period as the blockade continued shortly thereafter in response to continued Israeli actions in Gaza. If anything, the Houthis have convincingly demonstrated that decisions about the security architecture of Western Asia, largely cantered around the security of Israel, are no longer determined exclusively by the collective West, led by the USA. Through tactical actions in the maritime zones along the Gulf of Aden, the Strait of Bab al Mandeb and the Red Sea, the Houthis managed to achieve strategic level outcomes which require an updated approach into security issues of the region.

Iran/Israeli 12-day war

On 13 June 2025 Israel launched a military attack on Iran, dubbed Operation Rising Lion. The objective of this Operation, as the Israeli regime of Benjamin Netanyahu indicated, was to prevent the Islamic Republic of Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons by striking Iran's nuclear, military and civilian targets. According to Israel and its backers, primarily the US and its European vassals, a nuclear-armed Tehran, would spell an 'existential threat' for Israel, thus the justifying the launching of what turned out to be the 12-Day war between the two countries.



Iran does not recognise the State of Israel, or its right to exist, and it would be unacceptable for it to be allowed to develop a nuclear weapons capability. This is the dominant narrative that has for decades informed the policy positions of Israel and the collective West towards Iran. Iran's quest to derive benefit from the peaceful use of nuclear technology to generate electricity, and for broader economic development, as allowed in the Non-Proliferation Treaty which came into force in 1970. The third pillar of the treaty allows countries to develop nuclear technologies for peaceful development purposes. The Trump Administration, however, went as far as to call upon Iran to totally shut down its entire nuclear project, even for peaceful purposes, to which Tehran referred to as "unacceptable".

In response to the Israeli attack on its strategic facilities and other high-value targets, the Iranian government fired thousands of drones and missiles in the cities of Tel Aviv and East Jerusalem. The US had stationed five (5) US Ballistic Missile Defence Destroyers to protect Israel against Iranian retaliation (Lagrone, 2025). The French also deployed naval air defence assets in the area to form a shield in defence of Israel. The shield also included the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system based in Israel, the Israeli "Iron Dome" air defence system, touted as impenetrable by the Western experts, including the "David's Sling", and the Arrows air defence systems. In spite of all the combined Western air defence systems, some regarded as the most advanced in the world, Iranian missiles succeeded to pierce through and inflict significant damage to Israeli military and civilian strategic infrastructure and other high-value targets, proving beyond reasonable doubt that when put to the test against a peer or near peer rival, western military equipment simply underperform.

Alliance of Sahelian States (The French/US retreat in West Africa)

On the 16 September 2023 Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger came together to form the Alliance of Sahel States to enhance mutual defence against external aggression, foster economic cooperation and pool resources in the joint fight against jihadist insurgency that has troubled the region for long. The alliance follows a series of coups in the three countries starting with Burkina Faso in 2021 and 2022, followed by Mali in 2023 and Niger in 2023 which put in power popular military administrations in control of the respective states. The alliance accounts for about 17 per cent of the total ECOWAS population of 446 million, more than half of total land mass and 7.7 per cent of the region's total GDP (Ibeh, 2025). Given the aggressive economic policies of the AES, which seek to establish sovereignty over their energy, and mineral resources, it may well be expected that their combined GDP, both in nominal and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms, will grow significantly in the future. As the new geopolitical entity in Africa, the alliance's growth potential is conditional on





stamping out, through joint and coordinated actions, the jihadist insurgency that is fueled by external forces to perpetuate instability in the region.

The response of ECOWAS towards the coups in Niger and Mali was to suspend member countries from the regional organization, impose economic sanctions and, together with France and the US, threaten military intervention to restore civilian rule if a set deadline to relinquish power by the military administration is not met. This response only served to harden attitudes and led to these military leaders leveling accusations that ECOWAS has become a vehicle to enforce foreign interests on the member countries. What gave credence to the accusations was that the French had made vigorous efforts to engage ECOWAS for help to reverse the process in the three countries. President Tinubu, the Chair of ECOWAS, even tasked the Nigerian military to draw up plans for the forceful removal of the military governments in the countries with the cooperation of the dislodged French forces.

The American Administration, concerned about the waning Western influence in the region, also made attempts to re-insert itself back in the region after being booted out of the largest Drone Base in West Africa situated in Niger but with minimal success. Allegations are rife that Nigeria, Benin and Ivory Coast have allowed their countries to be utilized by foreign forces to destabilise the security situation in the AES.

The repeated failure of Western military intervention may be viewed as symptomatic of the new times – the West has lost military hegemony. It is no longer capable of unilaterally intervening militarily to maintain their neo-colonial grip on the Sahelian Alliance states without considering the costs to such military adventures.

IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICA

In one of his YouTube blog, Andrei Martian, the Russian military analyst, mentioned that the Russia Ukraine conflict represents the last salvos of WW2 to bring to a complete destruction Nazism that has re-surfaced in Ukraine and is supported by the Western ruling elites. It is in this conflict the end of which will spell the total demise of the military hegemony of the collective West. All Western military hardware, touted as technologically advanced for all the years, including the West's superior strategic and operational planning ability, have proved to be merely over-stated. For the first time since WW2, the West faced a peer rival military power and it showed lack-lustre performance against the Russian Army.

Expressing a similar assertion to that of Martian, the former Russian Minister of Defence, Gen Sergei Shoigu averred that, "Just as the defeat of fascism by the Red Army in Europe in



the last century gave a powerful impetus to anti-colonial movements throughout the world, so will the defeat of the Ukrainian neo-fascists supported by the West serve as a factor in counteracting modern neo-colonialism". This raises a number of pertinent implications for the African continent, which still labours under the yoke of neo-colonialism by the Western nations. The immediate implication is political. The demise of Western military hegemony should re-energise the forces of the stalled forces of national liberation against neo-colonial relations with the West. The popular coups in West Africa that ultimately resulted in the formation of the Alliance of Sahelian States (AES) can be viewed as an expression of Africa to rid itself of neo-colonialism and chart a path leading to genuine sovereignty and territorial integrity. The withdrawal of the French, American and other Western countries has diminished their influence in shaping events in the three countries constituting the Sahelian alliance. The repeated failures to divide and intervene militarily in the three countries in order to restore the rule of puppet regimes points to a declining military hegemony of the West, particularly of the USA, which would have no scruples in initiating an immediate military intervention to restore the *status quo ante*.

In terms of economics, given the immense endowment of Africa with critical mineral that are central to the 4th Industrial Revolution, the decline of the global hegemony of the West opens up space for countries to embark on a path of resource sovereignty in order to derive benefit from their natural resources and address poverty and inequality in their respective nations. The terms of engagement regarding rare-earth minerals and other resources need to be determined in genuine, mutually beneficial partnership with Africa and not by foreign powers for their exclusive benefit.

Africa needs to take advantage of the opening geopolitical space to pursue independent foreign policies and establish durable military and technological partnerships with countries that share common developmental interests with the continent. Though the volatile and uncertain geopolitical environment calls for political acumen, Africa must take heed of the dominant trends pointing to the migration of the political, economic and military power from the West to the East, and adopt appropriate policies.

In May of 2025, the veteran Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told a high-level security forum in Moscow that the "tectonic shift in world politics reflects the redistribution of power toward Eurasia, Africa, and Latin America". The inevitable defeat of Ukraine and its backers in the SMO launched by the Russians in 2022 will lead to the opening of greater political space for Africa to determine its own fate. There can be no greater impetus for Africa to approach with renewed energy the implementation of the Agenda 2063 with its vision and aspirations than the declining power of the Collective West. Africa must



vigorously take advantage of the shattered military hegemony of the US-led collective West to launch the last phase of national liberation which essentially entails economic sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

The Wolfowitz Doctrine, initiated in 1994, set the tone for post-Soviet American Administrations to pursue a foreign policy of Global Hegemony through the brazen unilateral use of military force to pursue their national interests. As the only remaining superpower, the US is assessed to have reached its peak in the period from 1989 to the financial crisis of 2008, and is now in decline as the world is experiencing tectonic geopolitical changes that challenge the US global pre-eminence (Saddiqui (Dr), 2024). This trend manifests itself starkly in the military sphere, an area that the US has disproportionately relied on in maintaining its imperial ambitions on planet earth. Assessed against latest developments in various critical areas of military technology, including in the sphere of hypersonic, long-range stand-off weapon systems, the initial advantages of widely dispersed Forward Operating Bases has become a weakness. Overall, the conflicts that the US, its proxies and vassals have been involved in, utilising military equipment long touted as the most advanced in the world, have proved to the world that the collective West, under the leadership of the US, has lost the technological edge – and with it - military hegemony. This trend opens up immense opportunities for Africa to embark on the second phase of the liberation struggle – economic emancipation.





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