

# THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION FIASCO FROM HEGEMONY TO EMPIRE AND THE OBAMA RESTORATION

## *Hegemonyadan İmparatorluğa Bush Yönetiminin Fiyaskosu ve Obama Restorasyonu*

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### **Abstract:**

As the Bush administration started to implement the empire project, the US transformed from hegemony to an empire. However, since the project failed, the US, which could not be an empire either, passed into a revision period, as there is no way going back to hegemony. From that point on, the US lost its luxury to dictate “be either on our side or against us” like it did during Bush’s term. During the Bush administration the US tried to use its advantageous status in the changing world with its empire project and strived to shape the said change in favor of its own interests. However, it could not succeed and, on the contrary, ended up weakening its present effectiveness and lost its superiority in many fields. Subsequently the Obama administration will mostly clean up the mess left by the Bush administration and will go for a revision. To start with, the Obama administration has to be on good terms with the Islamic World because of the badly distorted relations during Bush’s term.

**Keywords:** *Hegemony, Empire, Bush, Obama, Neo-Cons, Globalization, Unipolar, US Foreign Policy*

### **Özet:**

Bush yönetiminin imparatorluk projesini uygulamaya başlamasıyla ABD, hegemonyadan imparatorluğa doğru bir dönüşüm içerisine girmiştir. Ancak, Bush yönetiminin imparatorluk projesinin başarısızlığa uğramasıyla birlikte ABD, artık ne imparatorlukta ne de bu ülkenin hegemonyaya geri dönüşü söz konusuydu. Bu noktadan itibaren ABD, artık Bush dönemindeki gibi dünyaya “ya bizimlesiniz ya da bize karşı” şeklinde dikte etme lüksünü de kaybetmiştir. Bush yönetimi döneminde ABD, değişen dünyada avantajlı konumunu kullanarak imparatorluk projesini uygulamaya ve dünyayı kendi çıkarlarına göre şekillendirmeye çalışmıştı, fakat bu politikalar başarısızlıkla sonuçlanmakla kalmamış, pek çok alanda da ABD’nin üstünlüğünü kaybetmesine ve dünyadaki prestijinin de ciddi derecede zarar görmesine yol açmıştır. İşte bütün bunlardan sonra iktidara gelen Obama ile ABD’nin Bush yönetiminin enkazını temizlemeye ve yeni bir restorasyon/revizyon politikasına yöneldiği ifade edilebilir. Bu da Bush döneminde iyice bozulan ilişkiler nedeniyle Obama yönetiminin ilk olarak İslam dünyasıyla ilişkilerini düzeltmeye yönelik politika izleyeceği/diği anlaşılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Hegemonya, İmparatorluk, Bush, Obama, Neo-Kon, Küreselleşme, Tek Kutupluluk, Amerikan Dış Politikası*

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## INTRODUCTION

The formation of the American Empire could be traced back to the hierarchical formation of the international system in 1945, the Washington Consensus of the 1980s, and to the neo-liberalism waves or the term the new world order that was firstly used in 1989 and to globalization in the 1990s. In other words, the American Empire has gone through the stages mentioned above and come to existence on account of this period.<sup>1</sup> When we look from this perspective, the American Empire has come out because of a spontaneous<sup>2</sup> period. In terms of power paradigms, the American Empire can be identified due to the logical evaluation of American power.<sup>3</sup> According to the neo-cons of the Bush period, the American Empire can be defined as the destiny of the US.

When we look from the systemic perspective, the American Empire basically started with the vertical hierarchical structuring<sup>4</sup> of the international system in 1945 by the US, who won the Second World War. As an evolutionary process, it could be said that the American Empire has developed as a direct result of the neo-liberalism waves of the 1980s, and the Washington Consensus, a period that has gained momentum with globalization in the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> Parallel to globalization, the period of de-territorialization in the international system has started. On the other hand, with the collapse of the USSR in 1991, new markets were opened and with ‘spatial fix’, the hegemony of the global capital was widened. While globalization and the waves of enlargement were continuing with the soft, invisible, neutral situation of American hegemony, at the same time the US

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<sup>1</sup>Deepak Lal, *In Praises of Empires: Globalization and Order* (NY: Palgrave, 2004), 64.

<sup>2</sup>This spontaneity is a “structural determination” of the American Empire and it could be expressed as the basic characteristic of empire project.

<sup>3</sup>Ergin Yıldızođlu, *Hegemonyadan İmparatorluđa* (Everest Press, June 2003), 1.

<sup>4</sup>İlhan Uzel, “ABD Hegemonyasının Yeniden İnşası, Orta Dođu ve NATO,” *Mülkiye* Cilt XXVIII Sayı 243: 7-20, 7.

<sup>5</sup>Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (Gardners Books, 2004), 18.

model (which is globalization=Americanization) also became effective on global scale.

However, the American hegemony went into a crisis in the 1970s and began to be questioned<sup>6</sup> as a problem. During the 1990s the American hegemony lost its economic superiority or the new economic powers began to challenge the US. Because of that reason, until 2000s the American governments mentioned multilateral hegemony and the socio-economic dimension firstly. The Bush administration, as a result of these developments, has moved the military-security dimension of the hegemony to the fore. With this step, direct control period was adopted and the shift from hegemonic sovereignty to empire hegemony took place.

## **1. CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE: HEGEMONY AND THE EMPIRE**

The concept of hegemony as a Gramscian meaning hinges upon the unity of coercion and consent. The hegemonic power, which could also be defined as a type of sovereignty depending on context, is also the sum of components like accepting the leadership through consent and the capacity to repress the objections with the use of force and military power.<sup>7</sup> The consent here stays at the backside of the conscious. The military power is used for repressing the objections to the hegemony. In a wider perspective, the hegemonic power rules the economy and provides suitable ideological and cultural support so the ideological sovereignty comes to the fore. In addition, the hegemonic government is in the management of the world market by providing the necessary political stability and managing the functioning of the world market under its own political auditing. In other words, hegemony is a power<sup>8</sup>, which regulates; audits; organizes; and stabilizes the political economy of the world. In addition to these, the hegemonic government

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<sup>6</sup>John Agnew, "American Hegemony into American Empire? Lessons from the Invasion of Iraq," *Antipode* (2003): 871–885, 883.

<sup>7</sup>Yıldızoğlu, *Hegemonyadan*, 2.

<sup>8</sup>Richard B. DuBoff, "U.S. Hegemony: Continuing Decline, Enduring Danger," *Monthly Review* (December 2003).

should provide the energy resources and the ways for commerce to be opened and also manage the capitalism's crisis.<sup>9</sup> The *sine qua non* condition of the hegemonic power is to continue the production of hegemony continuously. To do this, there are not only some formal instruments like NATO, IMF and the World Bank, but also informal instruments like coup d'état, intelligence activities, illegal groups, and organizations, non-governmental institutions, foreign aids, economic sanctions, socio-cultural activities (media, series, new year, birthdays, Valentine's Day) provide the production of the hegemony continuously.<sup>10</sup>

According to Immanuel Wallerstein, with leadership in the fields of production, commerce, and finance, states could have hegemony. Nevertheless, the hegemonic power should hold economic and military power and superiority in the fields of technology and information altogether. The hegemonic power should prevent systematic wars and protect the system from internal and external attacks.<sup>11</sup> In this context, the hegemonic power imposes order to the international system. By this way, the international system has a more hierarchic and less anarchical structure.<sup>12</sup> Here, a vertical hierarchical structure, which depends on power, becomes valid in the international structure. This structure, which also spreads to the center-periphery relationship and the periphery also has some gains from the opportunities of the hegemonic power. The periphery should open its economy for the use of the center and the capital.<sup>13</sup> Because, when the hegemonic power is providing this, it also constitutes an area of consensus. In addition, the ideological, cultural, and ethical dimension should also be included in this analysis. Those dimensions also produce the hegemony, by composing the hegemonic momentum; rely upon the ideology, which

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<sup>9</sup> Yıldızoğlu, *Hegemonyadan*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Uzgel, "ABD Hegemonyasının," 7.

<sup>11</sup> Yıldızoğlu, *Hegemonyadan*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States' Unipolar Moment," *International Security* Vol 31 No 2 (Winter 2008): 7-41, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Saul, "Empire, Imperialism, and Contemporary Global Power," *International Studies Perspectives* 9 (2008): 309-318, 311.

defines and re-presents this moment. It also represents the concepts that support this ideology.<sup>14</sup>

The determining factor of the empire is the military power.<sup>15</sup> By this way, the empire means a hegemony that counts on military power as its base. In addition, the empire, which depends upon the superiority of the asymmetrical power, tries to govern by making the situation instable.<sup>16</sup> In this context, there is a destructive approach in the empires.<sup>17</sup> The search for absolute hegemony could also be called an empire and in this context, the empire signifies a process that is impossible to complete. The empire, which also has a pejorative meaning, means the period of colonization historically. All the same, each empire has some differences periodically.

One of the most important paradoxes about empires is the nature of the problem which is, in general, the excessive expansion. By this way, the empires lose their power and become unsuccessful.

## **2. FROM HEGEMONY TO EMPIRE**

Firstly, it should be mentioned that hegemony includes the tendency to transform into a hegemonic empire. Therefore, the changing of the US hegemony to an empire, as mentioned below, following some parameters is not very surprising. Historically, in 1991 with the dissolution of USSR, the barriers that were in front of the US hegemony, the competitors and threats were eliminated. By this way, the hegemony of the US turned into a unipolar international system that had no competitors and threats.<sup>18</sup> This case allowed the US to be a world empire. According to the neocons of the Bush period as

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<sup>14</sup>Niall Ferguson, "Hegemony or Empire?" *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2003). Accessed on 30 December 2009,

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/59200/niall-ferguson/hegemony-or-empire>.

<sup>15</sup>Hardt and Negri, *Empire* (Harvard University Press, September 15, 2001), 11.

<sup>16</sup>Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 14.

<sup>17</sup>Richard A. Falk, *Dünya Düzeni Nereye?: Amerikan Emperyal Jeopolitikası* (Metis Press, 2005), 333.

<sup>18</sup>Ferguson, *Colossus*, 124.

the winner of the Cold War, the US appeared in the new unipolar system and the empire emerged as a gift or as fate.<sup>19</sup> In other words, as a consequence of its superiority, the US rule changed from hegemony to an empire.<sup>20</sup>

However, the reverse of the coin pointed to an entirely different situation. Since the 1990s the US, with the collapse of the USSR and with the opening of new market space for the capital has witnessed a very rapid expansion and financial monitoring. As Fernand Braudel mentioned, this development was the fall of US hegemony. At the end of the 1990s, the US began to lose its superiority in many fields especially, in the economic areas.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the problems of capitalism during the 1990s also began to create the hegemony problem. In other words, in addition to the fiscal expansion of the US, first Southeast Asia and then the EU emerged as economic power centers.<sup>22</sup> This situation caused the capital to produce a new center, and became a competitor to the oldest center and this created the paradox.

In this context, attributable to the loss of the US' economic advantage; the US hegemony in a sense has begun to rally. The presence of a hegemonic power depends on the maintenance of its superiority at least in three fields (economic, military and technology).<sup>23</sup> In conjunction, the weakening of hegemonic position of the US, its feeling of declining, the concern for guaranteeing its future, delaying and as much as possible preventing its competitors' challenge, controlling strategic areas and energy resources are the most important factors for transition from hegemony to the empire. Not only the loss of economic superiority but also the economic-political areas like the Asian Crisis of 1997; the EU's transition to euro in 1999; the

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<sup>19</sup>Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance (American Empire Project)* (Holt Paperbacks, 2004), 167.

<sup>20</sup>G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition* (Polity, 2006), 238.

<sup>21</sup>Donald W. White, *The American Century: The Rise and Decline of the United States as a World Power* (Yale University Press, 1999), 426.

<sup>22</sup>John Vogler and Charlotte Bretherton, *The European Union as a Global Actor* (Routledge, 2006), 11.

<sup>23</sup>John A. Agnew, *Hegemony: The New Shape Of Global Power* (Temple University Press, 2005), 19.

Kosovo problem; the obstruction of the Middle East peace process; the chronic problems of Afghanistan and Iraq; the spreading of war trends in Africa; and the spread of nuclear weapons in India and Pakistan have shown how the US has become ineffective.

On the other hand, the argument of Karl Polanyi that the economic growth of the 1990s has brought growth to the US military should not be forgotten.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, by this way, the report of Paul Wolfowitz in 1992 and the work called “Revolutions in Military Affairs”<sup>25</sup> was financed. During the early periods like 1989, the concept called “The New World Order” had been pronounced officially for the first time. As it can be seen obviously and explained clearly, during the Bush period in the early 2000s the militarist tendency came to the front and thus imperialism and Realpolitik returned to the US.<sup>26</sup> However, at the same time the beginning of the empire meant the beginning of an end. The US, during the transition from hegemony to the empire has gone through a way that is impossible to return. The US will not be able to go back because hegemony cannot come back.

### **3. BUSH’S TERM AND THE EMPIRE PROJECT**

During Clinton’s term, the socioeconomic and cultural aspects of the United States’ power were prioritized in order to sustain the hegemony and the so-called soft and neutral aspect of sovereignty became dominant as globalization gained impetus.<sup>27</sup> When it came to Bush’s term, the said infrastructure was, in a way, used as a preparatory phase for the empire and it then passed to the military strategic stage. Likewise, the preference for direct military control over the indirect control strategy of the Clinton period

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<sup>24</sup>Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Beacon Press, 2. Edition, March 28, 2001), 145.

<sup>25</sup>Accessed on 14 May 2009, <http://www.comw.org/rma/>.

[http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1029/MR1029.chap2.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1029/MR1029.chap2.pdf),

Accessed on 14 June 2009, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq\\_pubs/1416pgs.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/1416pgs.pdf).

<sup>26</sup>Anthony Padgen, “Imperialism, liberalism & the quest for perpetual peace (Empires, history; American imperialism),” *Daedalus* Vol 134 Issue: 2 (2005): 46.

<sup>27</sup>Padgen, “Imperialism,” 1.

also represented the revival of the imperialist policy. In 1997, William Kristol, one of the intellectuals of ‘The New American Century’, used the term empire for the US in the Wall Street Journal for the first time. The other intellectuals of the project explicitly started the intellectual preparation of the empire project of the Bush administration. As a matter of fact, one of the said intellectuals, (Gray Schmidt, Richard Perle, Robert Kagan) Paul Wolfowitz, was the person to represent the government pillar of the project.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the Pentagon changed its strategic military geography, which was sort of a preparation for the empire project. This included Central Asia and the Middle East as the priorities of the United States with the establishment of CENTCOM in 1999.<sup>29</sup> It can be understood from the ‘Joint Vision 2020’ document<sup>30</sup> that the Pentagon regarded this change as new potential areas of conflict. Accordingly, the priority on the Pentagon’s agenda was to prepare the US army and its military bases for wars over resources within the framework of conventional modernization. For that reason, the tendency of the Bush government towards a control strategy over the energy resources is very meaningful. Furthermore, the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) document<sup>31</sup> of 2001 declares the United States as the single country in the world having global interests, as if accepting the idea of ‘empire’ in the national security strategy of the US; which can be interpreted, in a sense, as the declaration of an empire.

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<sup>28</sup> Agnew, *Hegemony*., 877.

<sup>29</sup>The United States made a projection in 1999 and identified strategic regions that should be taken under control in the future, and adopted a policy to design its military deployment accordingly. To this end, The Pacific Command selected Asia as the Central Command and an area of interest. This indicates the change in the strategic geography of the US. The fact that the US occupied Afghanistan first after September 11 under the framework of its anti-terrorism strategy proves the said policy. M. Klare, “New Geography of Conflict,” in *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict* (First Owl Books, 2002), 216.

<sup>30</sup>For detailed information see, Accessed on 02 January 2009, <http://www.dtic.mil/jointvision/jvpub2.htm>.

<sup>31</sup>For detailed information see, Accessed on 14 March 2009, <http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/>.



However, in order to implement the empire project, there was a need for a threat,<sup>32</sup> and that need was satisfied by the September 11 attacks; it provided the opportunity for the US to officially put the empire project into practice.<sup>33</sup> In fact, just after the attacks, the United States enforced the empire project under the cover of the anti-terrorism strategy. The official document of this was the National Security Strategy document of the United States for 2002 (NSS).<sup>34</sup> The US broke new grounds in this strategy document and declared *preemptive strikes* or *preventive war doctrine* for the first time. It can be argued that, with this development, the US proceeded to an imperial dimension and started to seek an absolute hegemony. It means that the United States wants to reregulate the world according to its own benefits and secure its future against the changing balance of powers by means of using its advantageous position. In other words, it can be interpreted as an effort to call a halt to deterioration through military means or to prevent the emerging powers from being potential rivals. Considering the preemptive strike tactic of the Bush administration, it is understood that the empire prefers to elicit respect by means of creating terror with violence and thereby obtaining obedience in the end.<sup>35</sup> However, the hegemonic power preferred to have the admiration of people by means of impressing them with its superiority in military and other fields. Likewise, another important difference is that the use of military power, which is the last option in hegemony, is selected as

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<sup>32</sup>At this point, if we think on the basis of the logic of US foreign policymakers and strategists, the possibility of the US, that needed a threat, building the Al-Qaeda threat is interesting, although it is somewhat speculative and banks on a conspiracy theory. In addition, we can briefly explain the reason why a threat is required with two main factors. Firstly, the need to sustain the continuous active presence and status of a power; just like the example of the Ottoman history. That is, after the Ottoman Empire defeated the Spanish navy, which it deemed as a rival and threat in the Mediterranean, its navy was left to decay in the shipyard; that is a striking example. Secondly, the threat has a function of legitimizing the implementation of the said policy. In this context, it can be stated that the Al-Qaeda threat is the main legitimizing factor in the implementation of the empire project by the US.

<sup>33</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon, 1998), 216.

<sup>34</sup>For detailed information see, Accessed on 04 June 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2002/index.html>.

<sup>35</sup>Michael Ignatieff, "The Burden," January 5, 2002.

the first choice in the Bush administration within the framework of the empire project. Just as with its preemptive strike strategy, the US clearly declared its monopoly over the use of military power in the world.

In this strategic document, the Bush government was declaring that the Grand strategy did not want to see any rival powers until 2025 and that it would do anything, including preemptive war, in order to sustain its indisputable military superiority. In other words; in this strategy and in the empire project, the United States wanted to be so far ahead of its potential rivals that those states would not seek to compete and the US would maintain its position as the incontestable superpower. From this point of view, the US was planning to implement the neo-imperial project using military power and direct control as a base.<sup>36</sup> The *axis of evil* definition of the Bush administration was also expressing the *exterminatory approach* of the administration. This approach is interesting, since it shows that the strategy of integration during the hegemony period was abandoned. Likewise, after the September 11 attacks the Bush administration introduced an anti-terrorism strategy against Al-Qaeda and global terrorism, and tried to build an imperial structure by establishing hierarchical relations in the rest of the world under the cover of anti-terrorism. In this context, it seems that it preferred to govern the region directly through military deployment in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition, with the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and its new bases<sup>37</sup> the US aims at seizing the opportunity to control

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<sup>36</sup>If we recall that militarized direct control mechanism is the imperial control mechanism and empires implement it, it is understood that the US tried to implement the empire project explicitly as it can be seen in the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq.

<sup>37</sup>When we consider the fact that the US has about 725 military bases throughout the world in 130 countries and that it acts as a global gendarmerie at the world seas with its navy, it is clearly understood that the US is targeting to be a global empire. Within this framework, it is seen that the US is trying to implement the imperial management mechanisms by means of using the newly established COMs as the regional management centers of its global authority; thereby it is trying to build the architecture of the empire. Just as, in this context, it is quite interesting that AFRICOM was established in 2006 during the Bush administration in a region prone to new resource wars, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Fleet is reactivated in the shores of Latin

energy resources, control routes, and emerging powers as well as establishing pseudo-colonies. Similarly, within this framework, by means of its definition of ‘rogue states’ and ‘failed states’, the United States adopts regime change as a foreign policy strategy just like in the empire states.<sup>38</sup>

While implementing the empire project, the Bush administration also made use of its moral, ideological, and religious motives.<sup>39</sup> The religious discourse and universal statements of the Bush administration point that out.<sup>40</sup> For instance, the concept of freedom is highlighted and the US is declared to be the guardian of freedom. However, it is interesting to see that the civilizing mission of the old British Empire is replaced by the discourses of bringing freedom and democracy this time.<sup>41</sup>

It is possible to state that the empire project, which is implemented under the scope of the abovementioned aims and objectives, became a chronic problem particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan due to the fact that the United States is being bogged down in these two countries. In the final analysis, it resulted in a big fiasco because of the economic crisis of 2008. It can also be claimed that revision policies will prevail from now on.

#### **4. REASONS FOR THE FAILURE OF THE EMPIRE PROJECT**

Many factors played important roles in the failure of the empire strategy of the Bush administration. The main reasons can be explained as follows: First of all, basing the empire project solely on the military power raised some reactions. Among the Atlantic allies, the Germany-France axis resisted the

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America. See. Joshua Micala Marshall, “Power: Rangers: Did the Bush Administration Create a new American Empire or weaken the all done?” *The New Yorker*, 02.02.2004.

<sup>38</sup>Harry D. Harootunian, *The Empire's New Clothes: Paradigm Lost, and Regained* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 1 edition, 2004), 48.

<sup>39</sup>Ferguson, *Colossus*, 203.

<sup>40</sup>G. Ryn, op. cit., p. 386.

<sup>41</sup>Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (Basic Books, 2004), 221.

unilateral hegemony of the US. This resistance reached its peak with the occupation of Iraq and led to the sharpening of the Atlantic separation.<sup>42</sup> In addition, it can be argued that military power was insufficient for the implementation of the empire project. The delay of the United States in redesigning the army according to the changing conditions and failures in Afghanistan and Iraq, turned its indisputable military authority into a disputable one, which played an effective role in the failure of the project. Economic and financial incompetence of the US also played an important role in this failure. Trade deficit as well as oil dependency were the challenging issues for the United States.

Interdependency has increased as a result of the global tendency towards an integrated economic structure since the 1980s and the United States turned into a dependent hegemony as a result.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the maintenance of the military strategy by the Bush administration depended on the funding of its allies and volunteers.

On the other hand, one of the essential factors of failure was the fact that the balance of power started to change systemically. The emerging powers were not eager to accept Pax Americana and the US could not prevent these emerging powers from becoming its rivals. Moreover, the fact that the emerging powers already started to compete particularly over resources, and they rose as new competitive powers even in areas under the US authority, indicates that the United States was late in preventing them. In fact, the unilateral approach of the US caused reaction and resistance against the empire project on the side of the emerging powers. Especially, under the framework of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China and Russia objected to the unipolar and unilateral dominance and advocated equal status and multipolarity. On the other hand, the overexpansion paradox<sup>44</sup>, which is the natural fate of empires, played an important role in raising reactions

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<sup>42</sup>Uzgel, "ABD Hegemonyasının," 11.

<sup>43</sup>Martin Wolf, "The Dependent Superpower," *Financial Times*, December 17, 2003.

<sup>44</sup>Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict Since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century* (Is Bankasi Pub., 2006), 14.

against the empire project of the US and in its failure. Together with the overexpansion, the United States not only became more vulnerable, but also the costs increased and it started to lose its allies, even to see them turn into opposing powers. In addition to all these facts, there are some so-called secondary factors such as lack of an integrated plan; lack of a dedicated elite in the management of the project; and underestimating and ignoring the local issues in the project implementation strategy<sup>45</sup>. The financial relationship, also called global imbalances, which emerged after the Asian crisis, can be added to the abovementioned factors in the context of financial resource problems.

## **5. POTENTIAL FOREIGN POLICY TENDENCIES OF THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION**

Contrary to the expectations, there will not actually be a radical change in foreign policy of the Obama administration when compared to the Bush administration. In other words, there will be no change in the grand strategy<sup>46</sup> of the US (like preventing the emergence of rival powers and energy security). However, it can be stated that the methods and instruments to be used in the implementation of this strategy will change. It is possible to expect some differences in the selection of methods/instruments in foreign policy between the two periods, just like the difference between Clinton's term and Bush's term.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the global financial crisis of the day will be the most significant parameter to be considered in the foreign policy of the Obama administration.<sup>48</sup> Within the framework of these parameters, it is expected that the unilateral policies such as, acting without consulting with the allies and international organizations; ignoring international law and the

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<sup>45</sup>Ergin Yıldızoğlu, *Lectures* (Faculty of Political Sciences, Ankara University, December 2008).

<sup>46</sup>James M. McCormick, *American Foreign Policy and Process* (Wadsworth Publishing, 2009), 521.

<sup>47</sup>David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1998), 298.

<sup>48</sup>John Davis, *Barack Obama & US Foreign Policy: Road Map for Change or Disaster?* (AuthorHouse, 2009), 78.

UN; and imposing its will to the rest of the world will be given up by the Obama administration, and multilateral policies will be more dominant.<sup>49</sup> In this context, one may say that the foreign policy of the Obama administration is going to have economic instruments instead of military instruments and militarist policies. The US foreign policy is going to be more focused on economic policies together with the effect of the global financial crisis. Therefore, it may be stated that the ‘soft power’ or ‘smart power’ approach will prevail instead of the ‘hard power’, which was frequently expressed in the foreign policy of the Bush administration.

Transatlantic relations, which were distorted during the Bush administration, are expected to be rebuilt during Obama’s term and the United States is expected to act more in harmony and in collaboration with Europe. Within this scope, in the forthcoming period we should not be surprised to see photos of the European quartet (France-UK-Germany-Italy), which emerged by reason of the global financial crisis, and Obama in the same frames quite frequently. The global financial crisis reminded us that, in fact, the US and Europe are on the same boat. In other words, if the US goes down, the EU will go down as well. The development of transatlantic relations may, at the same time, lead to a situation where, together with the efforts of the EU, the United States hegemony will be held accountable. Similarly, instead of the use of force strategies, such as preemptive strike, of the Bush administration, diplomacy and dialogue policies are expected in the new period within the framework of a pragmatic approach. Moreover in this new period, just like with the example of Iran, it can be argued that multilateral diplomatic pressure and economic sanction policies will be more dominant instead of military operation options. However, in cases where Iran does not respond to dialogue policies, it is difficult to claim that there will be no military operations, at least in the form of air strikes.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, Obama is also expected to introduce and develop a new peace

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<sup>49</sup>Inderjeet Parmar, Linda B. Miller, and Mark Ledwidge, *New Directions in US Foreign Policy*, (*Routledge Studies in US Foreign Policy*) (Routledge, 2009), 271.

<sup>50</sup>*The Geopolitics of American Insecurity: Terror, Power and Foreign Policy (Prior New Security Studies)*, ed. J Peter Burgess, Francois Debrix, Mark Lacy (Routledge, 2009), 122.

concept within the framework of the abovementioned approaches in place for the Bush doctrine. From that point of view, it may possibly be stated that a geo-economic approach will be preferred in lieu of the geopolitical vision of the Bush period.

Obama is also expected to take steps to rehabilitate relations in terms of anti-Americanization, which has developed in its backyard, Latin America, as a result of the United States' strategy during the Bush administration to spread its global hegemony to the whole world. After that, distorted and stressful relations with Russia can be improved and the NATO-Russia Council, which is suspended because of the Georgian-Russian conflict, can be reactivated. In this context, it can be stated that in the new period more importance will be attached to the policies for reestablishment and strengthening of multilateral armament regimes with big powers like the EU, China and particularly Russia in order to ensure international security and peace<sup>51</sup>. It can be envisaged that regarding the Iraq issue, which is an indispensable priority of Obama's foreign policy, the withdrawal schedule may be put into implementation on a gradual basis and that NATO may play a role in the security of Iraq within the multilateral cooperation framework.

The anti-terrorism strategy, which was the main reference point of the foreign policy of the Bush administration (the real face of the US hegemony is revealed by this strategy during the Bush administration and "the king isnaked"), is expected to be managed in a way more coherent with the multilateral international cooperation and international law (the UN). However, it is understood that the main reference point will be replaced with the rehabilitation of the global capitalist economic system. To be clear, the most important and long lasting issue to be dealt with that will be on the top of the agenda throughout Obama's term will be the US economy and the global financial crisis. In other words, because of the global financial crisis – considering the fact that the crisis will last for a long period (10-15 years) – the economy will be a dominant and prioritized issue in domestic and foreign policy so as to overcome the crisis with minimum damage. We can

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<sup>51</sup>*The Geopolitics of American Insecurity*, 75.

say that the agenda will be occupied with this issue at least in the first period of Obama's term. Therefore, it is estimated that the Obama administration will be kept busy with the US economy, recovery, and rehabilitation of the global capitalist system. In short, we can deduct from all issues that the Obama administration will mostly clean up the mess left by the Bush administration and will go for a *revision*.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is a strong possibility that due to the fiasco of the empire project of the Bush government, the Obama administration will follow the Grand strategy of extending as much as possible the superpower status of the United States and slowing down the emerging powers as much as possible in order to prevent them from becoming rivals.<sup>52</sup> Within this framework, it is foreseen that during Obama's term, the hegemonic struggle will take place in the geopolitical area of the Black Sea, Caucasus, Central Asia, Africa, and Asia-Pacific.<sup>53</sup> In parallel, it is predicted that the modernization of the Pentagon's conventional forces in line with the conditions of the new period will be maintained<sup>54</sup> and the US will continue to make preparations for the war over resources. One of the crucial points is that the Obama administration has to be on good terms with the Islamic world because of the badly distorted relations during Bush's term and within this framework, it is anticipated that the Palestine-Israeli issue will be settled, at least to an extent that is acceptable for Israel.<sup>55</sup>

It can be argued that as the Bush administration started to implement the empire project, the United States transformed from hegemony to an empire.

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<sup>52</sup>It can be thought that the US may implement an instability policy in the Asia-Pacific controlled by the Afghanistan-Pakistan-India triangle.

<sup>53</sup>Uzgel, "ABD Hegemonyasının," 13.

<sup>54</sup>Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs* (January-February 2009); Barack Obama, "Renewing American leadership," *Foreign Affairs* (July-August 2007).

<sup>55</sup>Appointment of bureaucrats from Clinton's term in the Obama administration is a sign for this fact.



However, since the project failed, the US, which could not be an empire either, passed into a revision period as there is no way going back to hegemony. In the meantime, the efforts spent by the US for the implementation of the empire project led to some systematic changes for both the US and the international system. First of all; while the indisputable military authority of the United States weakened, the economic authority of the United States against China in Asia and the EU in Europe, and its political influence to a certain extent, have lost strength<sup>56</sup>. In the Caucasus and Central Asia, on the other hand, the US penetration into the region is hindered as a result of Russia's resistance. From that point on, the US lost its luxury to dictate "be either on our side or against us" as it did during Bush's term. From a systematic point of view, the failure of the Bush administration's foreign policy had a catalyst effect on the change of the balance of power<sup>57</sup> and accelerated the shift of weight in favor of Asia-Pacific. Now, the geopolitics of the world is changing with the distinctive emerging powers and the international system passing through a centerless or multi-centered transition period. Therefore, the international system is guided towards a structure with multiple actors. Besides these developments, as we see that protectionism is becoming more widespread and economic nationalism is on the rise together with intensive competition for resources, the world gradually resembles the period before World War I. In other words, the world is going fast towards a new imperialism period, where competition and conflicts will take place over the resources. In a nutshell, the United States tried to use its advantageous status in the changing world with its empire project during the Bush administration and strived to shape the said change in favor of its own interests. However, it could not succeed and, on the contrary, ended up weakening its present effectiveness and lost its superiority in many fields.

In the final analysis, as Michael Ignatieff stated, the imperial role of the United States, which stemmed from its superiority, could not turn the US

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<sup>56</sup> DuBoff, "U.S. Hegemony:" 4.

<sup>57</sup> Eland, "The Empire Strikes Out: The New Imperialism and the Its Fatal Flaws," *Policy Analysis* No 459, Cato (Institute: November 26, 2002), 1–23.

into an empire, it even took the US out of hegemony, the so-called paradise, as a result of its weakness.

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