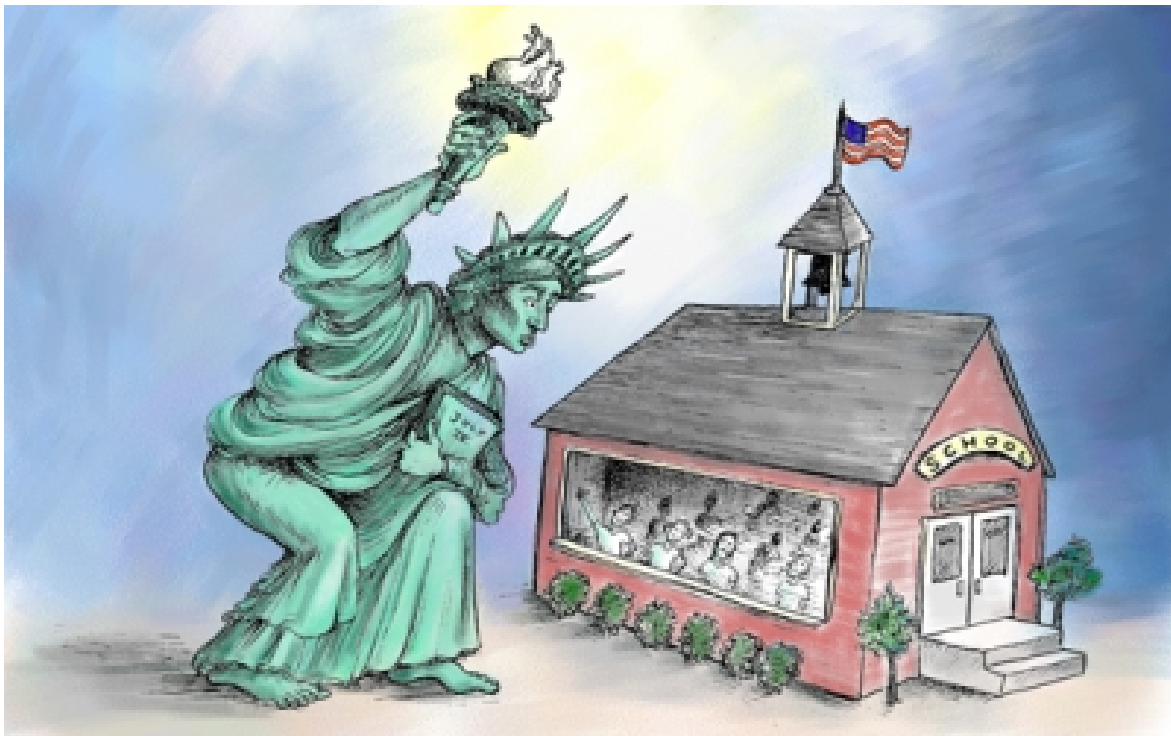


The American Amnesia



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In 1953, at British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's urging, the Eisenhower administration carried out a coup overthrowing a democratically elected prime minister of Iran, Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh and replaced him with a puppet named Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In 1979, the people of Iran overthrew him. Ever since then, Iran has become our arch enemy. Was the coup a wise policy?

The Korean War lasted for three years from July, 1950 till July, 1953. In its wake, a staggering number of military men and civilians lost their lives. American casualties were 142,091 with 33,629 killed. The casualties also included more than a million Chinese, and hundreds of thousands of North and South

Koreans. South Korea was shattered while the North Korean countryside was laid waste. Millions of South Koreans were made fugitive and hundreds of thousands fled to North Korea. Half of Korea's industry was destroyed while hundreds of thousands of its homes were demolished.

The war ended in a stale mate.

So were the enormous costs in men and materials worth the price? Perhaps that question should be asked to the American, Chinese and Korean families of dead and injured.

Our great Five Star General, General Omar Bradley best described this war thus, "Frankly, a great military disaster, the wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong enemy." If he were alive today, he would perhaps have said the same thing about our current wars with Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Vietnam War was one of the greatest blunders of American Foreign Policy. It spanned five presidencies. More than 58,000 young Americans lost their lives. Major parts of Vietnam were laid waste.

In this horrible war, millions of Vietnamese civilians and military personnel were killed and injured. Four million Vietnamese were terribly sickened by Agent Orange that we had sprayed. As a result, 500,000 babies were born with birth defects.

By the time the massive bombing of Cambodia stopped, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians were killed and injured. Hundreds of thousands were sickened by Agent Orange. Four to six million land mines were dropped. Today, there are about 35,000 people who are amputees as a result of land mines exploding on them. The polite people of Cambodia had done no harm to us.

In our war with Iraq in 1991, as per International Commission of Inquiry, 150,000 civilians were killed including 100,000 post war deaths. As per UN reports, 500,000 children died due to the brutal sanctions that we had insisted upon. It was also a major environmental disaster. The Bush (Sr.) administration had rejected every negotiation or compromises that were offered. It was a war that the United States badly wanted. Iraq's infrastructure and major civilian facilities were destroyed. Unbearable death and destruction was brought on the country. What harm had Iraqi people done to us? What crime had they committed?

The Second Iraq War of 2003 was waged on the basis of 'false' information. Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11 or al-Qaeda. It was nothing short of a catastrophe. We lost more than 4,000 of our young men and women. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people were killed. Some reports put the figure at more than 1 million civilians killed. Millions were made refugees. The whole country was laid waste by our horrible bombing. Why did we bring such terrible death and destruction on Iraqi people who had done us no harm? Is it fair that hundreds of thousands of civilians including our own young men die in order to quench our thirst to dominate other countries resources and people?

According to Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, the Iraq war will ultimately cost our country more than \$3 trillion. Our children and grandchildren will be paying for it. This immoral war

was totally funded by borrowing. Our national debt soared from \$6.4 trillion in March 2003 to \$10 trillion in 2008 (before the financial crisis); as per Stiglitz, at least a quarter of that increase is directly attributable to the war.

As seen from above, our gains from this war were none except some lucrative contracts for our already rich oil companies.

In 1839, the British invaded Afghanistan with 20,000 British and Indian troops, toppled the Afghan leader and installed Shah Shuja who was driven from power decades earlier. Within three years, their situation became hopeless. They desperately managed to negotiate a treaty to withdraw. On January 6, 1842, 4,500 British troops and 12,000 civilians--who had followed the British Army to Kabul--began their withdrawal from Kabul to Jalalabad. Many died in brutally cold weather. The remaining thousands were attacked at the mountain pass by the Afghans. The retreat became a massacre. One week later, just one man, a British army surgeon, bloody and exhausted, riding a wretched pony, managed his escape to Jalalabad and survived to tell the gruesome story. Ultimately, the British withdrew from Afghanistan altogether in disgrace. The Soviets too were badly bruised there a few years after their 1979 invasion. But learning nothing from history, we invaded Afghanistan in 2001. The Afghanistan Conflict still rages on after twelve grueling years with 1580 American and 2000 coalition forces killed. To date, \$558 billion have been spent.

It is obvious that our elected leaders in Washington seem to learn very little from history that coups, invasions and wars are not a good policy. On the long run, they work against our own national interests. Wars bring unbearable suffering as thousands of our young men lose their lives or are badly injured inflicting agonizing misery on them and their families. At the same time, the victim countries' civilian populations are decimated. Besides this enormous human suffering, these wars cost staggering amounts of capital and resources. When are we going to heed the lessons of history, one wonders.

When some 50 million Americans live below the poverty line and when our national debt stands at close to \$16 trillion, how can we afford such wars? Trillions of dollars that are squandered in these unnecessary wars can be so well spent in helping our fellow Americans who are desperate for help.

If humanity is to survive, it should be recognized that the greatness of a nation is measured neither by its military might nor by its 'victories' in its immoral wars waged on weaker nations but by its compassion and care for its own poor masses and by its benevolence to the destitute people of the world.
