**Lessons from Hiroshima**

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August marks the 73rd anniversary of the barbaric attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On August 6, the US dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, killing 86,000 people instantly and leaving 35,000 others injured.

It is estimated that by the end of 1945, 60,000 more people had lost their lives as a result of the blast. The population of the hapless city was only 300,000. So, almost 50 percent of its population died in the blast. The attack also demolished more than 70 percent of the city’s buildings. Some historians believe that over 90 percent of Hiroshima was destroyed in the August 6 bombing.

It appears that the attack on Hiroshima didn’t quench the flames of rage and fury. So, the American ruling elite turned another Japanese city into an open graveyard. On August 9, the US targeted civilians in Nagasaki, killing around 40,000 people. Both attacks killed over 200,000 people while millions suffered the direct or indirect effects of radiation for decades.

It is believed that these attacks brought Imperial Japan to its knee, forcing the emperor to surrender to the Allies on August 15, 1945. But many historians have argued that it was the Tokyo bombardment by the allied forces that had broken the back of Japanese defence forces and diminished their will to fight.

The bombing, carried out on the night of March 9-March 1o, killed around 100,000 people. If independent sources are anything to go by, the attack killed 88,000 people and injured 41,000. Tokyo’s fire department estimated a much higher death toll. According to the department, 97,000 people were killed and 125,000 others were wounded. Some historians are of the view that the bombardment and its casualties were overshadowed by nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that sent shiver down the spine of pacifists across the world.

The blasts created much fury among peace-loving people across the world. But they did little to prevent the US from planning more attacks against other alleged enemies. While Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein and many other prominent figures made consistent efforts to emphasise the need for a denuclearisation of the world, their advice did little to stop the world from developing a fascination for weapons of mass destruction.

The attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki failed to shake the conscience of America’s ruling elite. Security analysts believe that the US not only planned to carry out nuclear attacks against the Soviet Union in 1946 but also threatened to use lethal arms on several occasions.

Historians have asserted that the US ruling elite and officials discussed the possibility of using nuclear weapons during the Korean War, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam invasion. Even after 9/11, George W Bush hurled threats at various countries, hinting that the US could resort to any measures against its enemies – including the use of nuclear arm. US President Donald Trump recently issued veiled nuclear threats to Iran and North Korea. The spectre of nuclear war that loomed large during the cold war doesn’t seem to be over yet.

During this period of ideological tension, Moscow and Washington amassed thousands of nuclear arsenals. France, China and the UK also acquired destructive arms while Pakistan and India decided to go nuclear in the 1990s. According to experts, only the US and the USSR had enough destructive weapons during the 1980s to destroy the world more than three times. At one time, these nuclear arsenals amounted to over 30,000.

Over 17 million people died in World War I, 70 million lost their lives in the Second World War, three million were killed in the Korean War and over four million other perished during the American invasion of Vietnam. But our thirst for death and destruction hasn’t been satiated. The world has witnessed more than 280 major and minor conflicts since the end of the Second World War. Various conflicts are still raging across the globe. In recent decades, around 2.5 million Iraqis have died and 500,000 Syrians have been felled by what Damascus has referred to as a “Western-imposed jihadists war”. Afghanistan hasn’t witnessed any respite from the merciless forces of war, misery, death and destruction.

Some of these war fronts could turn out to be quite unpredictable. Critics believe the American method of regime-change could spell disaster for the world and push various countries towards conflagrations. Attempts to dislodge anti-Western governments in several parts of the world have boomeranged on Washington, London and Paris. They have inflamed Libya, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq on the one hand and raised the spectre of terrorism within Western countries on the other. While these policies are catastrophic, it seems that the Western ruling elite enjoy playing with fire.

In its bid to appease Israel, the US administration has turned a blind eye to the atrocities of the Zionist state against Palestinians, which are adding to the number of ideological ‘jihadists’ whom Washington consider to be dangerous terrorists. Ironically, America’s ruling elite is showering favours on radical elements to destabilise the Assad regime in Syria. This has been done to satisfy its Arab allies in the Middle East. Now, Moscow and other countries of Asia are accusing the anti-Isis America of bringing these jihadists to the doors of Russia, China, Iran and the Central Asian States.

The activities of these jihadists seem to lend credence to speculations that they are backed by the West. Despite their tall claims of fighting Zionism and the ‘American empire’, they have ended up fighting against the enemies of the US, such as Qaddafi in Libya and Assad in Syria.

After fleeing to Afghanistan from Syria and Iraq under the watchful eye of Western troops, they are now set to take on Russia, China, Iran, the Afghan Taliban and the Central Asian States.

Given that the global jihadist outfit has included people from China, Russia, Pakistan, the Central Asian States and other countries in its rank and file, it is likely to emerge as a major threat to all these states. If the Western countries lend any covert or overt support to these jihadists, it will pit China, Russia and other big powers against Western nuclear states. The logical result is a catastrophic conflict that could escalate into a nuclear war.

We can pay homage to those who lost their lives in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by making tireless efforts to prevent states from plunging into the abyss of instability. We must realise that such instability could trigger a conventional war, which could easily transform into nuclear warfare. With big powers armed to the teeth with destructive weapons, the very existence of humankind remains under threat. Saving the world from this form of annihilation will be a great favour to humanity.

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