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**Searching for enemies**

Historically, the United States of America is not a nation in a typical European sense. The land of opportunity housed a myriad of ethnic groups ranging from the convicts of Ireland to the indentured labour of England and Scotland. The new territory also attracted immigrants from Germany, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Holland, Baltic region and other parts of the world. In addition to that, millions of black slaves were also coerced into making their way to the new bastion of democracy.

Since the US was not a nation with a common language, culture and traditions, it was difficult for the American ruling elite to forge unity among the diverse ethnic entities. First it was the enmity of the United Kingdom and later it was the European hegemonic powers that created a sense of cohesiveness among the inhabitants of the new land that prompted them to wage a collective struggle against the interventionist policies of Europe aimed at dominating the Western hemisphere. In the absence of a strong sense of nationhood, it was the enemy that kept the Americans united but unfortunately this trend of searching for enemies is so embedded in American culture that it seems they can't survive without it.

Even after kicking out the European powers from their backyard, they continued looking for other foes. Except for the brief period of isolation, when America appeared to be non-interventionist, most American leaders have tried to invent an enemy to frighten their own into unifying themselves. During the First World War, it was the unbridled power of some European countries that seemed to keep Americans united. The years before the Second World War created the monster of fascism and expansionism that kept the sense of oneness intact. Washington allied with the Free World first to contain the tentacles of the Nazi menace but later joined all the likeminded states that were ready to battle the insanity of Hitler and of an expansionist Japan.

It was thought that after the defeat of Nazism and Fascism, the US would have no enemy but even before the end of the Second World War, the USSR and the communist world were described as the new enemy.

This new era of hostility turned out to be very catastrophic for a world that was already reeling under the destructive effects of the war. The war had claimed more than 70 million lives besides causing unimaginable destruction to various parts of the world. Billions of dollars – or possibly trillions – were lost in this insane game of blood and carnage.

But soon after the Second World War, global peace was jeopardized again first by the creation of Israel in 1948, then the Swiss crisis and finally the Chinese proletarian revolution of 1949. The three events created a spectre of a global conflict. From eastern and western Europe to Latin America and from parts of Asia to deserts of Africa, humanity seemed to be divided along ideological lines and on the verge of annihilation.

During the cold war, the US did not directly confront its arch enemy – the USSR – but the hostility between the two proved to be very costly for the developing world. The Korean War of the early 1950s claimed more than three million lives, the American invasion of Vietnam decimated around seven million people while the Afghan conflict of 1979 also killed more than two million human beings. In addition to that, the specter of a nuclear war continued looming large on the global political landscape.

The demise of the Soviet Union was heralded as a triumph of democracy and peace, with political pundits predicting a world free from wars and conflicts. But even the dismemberment of the most powerful country on the earth could not pave the way for permanent peace. Even before the end of the communist country, the US waged a terrible war against Iraq reminding the world that now it would be Washington that would be calling the shots in global affairs. The war was followed by crippling sanctions that devoured more than 500,000 Iraqi children, which a senior US official unabashedly justified, reflecting the total apathy of the American ruling elite towards the plight of the innocent people of Iraq. The destruction of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and a number of conflicts in Africa and Asia indicated that the dream of peace could not be translated into a reality because of the belligerent policy of the West.

After the debacle of the Soviet Union, drug trafficking and brutal dictators emerged as the new enemy of the US and the military industrial complex that wanted to sell its arms to satiate its gargantuan appetite for profit and voracious greed for money-making. But the war against dictators could not be sustainable for a long time. So, a new enemy had to be created. The 9/11 attacks provided this opportunity, creating the bogey of Islamic terrorism.

The United States and its allies have pumped more than five trillion dollars into the global 'war on terror' since 9/11, ostensibly to battle religious extremism. In the process, more than 2.5 million people perished in Iraq and more than 550,000 were engulfed by the Syrian conflict that also rendered over 11 million homeless. The Arab state also lost over 200 billion dollars because of the destruction of infrastructure. The 'war on terror' also played havoc with the lives of people in Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and other parts of the world.

While this war is still ongoing, the US has come up with new doctrines declaring Russia and China as the new enemies. Washington and its Western allies are pumping billions of dollars into this new possible battle. Even the terrible pandemic that has claimed millions of lives could not prevent the ruling elites of the West from pondering over possibilities of conflicts with Beijing and Moscow. All the parties to the conflicts are armed with nuclear weapons. During the decade of the 1980s, the USSR and the US were capable of destroying the entire world twice through their lethal arms of extermination. Now with supersonic missiles and race in space between global powers, the very existence of humanity appears to be on the verge of extinction.

The tensions between Moscow and Washington, on the one hand, and China and Europe on the other are capable of not only jeopardizing the lives of people living in these parts of the world, but could also create an existential threat for every living being on earth. Unfortunately, despite all the tall claims of peace and reconciliation, US President Joe Biden and his tedious acolytes are also following Trump's belligerent policy, approving the scrapping of a number of treaties despised by the former erratic chief executive of the second largest democracy.

Biden is not only taking a tough line against China but Russia as well, nudging the two to unite against Washington and its allies. Any conflict between the West and a Sino-Russian alliance could spell disaster. One of the solutions lies in resisting the temptation to create a new enemy for the sake of the military industrial complex. The West and its allies must put an end to this trend of searching for new enemies; instead, they should be looking for friends. This is possible if we allow sanity to prevail.

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