**White man`s Biden**

B Y F.S. AIJAZUD D IN 2021-09-02

THE burden of failure weighs heavily on President Joe Biden`s shoulders, as it did on president John F. Kennedy`s in 1961. After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, his wife Jackie recalled that in the privacy of his bedroom, Kennedy `put his head down into his hands and almost sobbed`. That experience taught Kennedy to be distrustful of the CIA, the State Department, and even his National Security Council. President Biden may need to use the same White House bedroom to vent his anguish.  
  
Despite a century of military exertions outside its own borders, the United States never founded an empire. During the PhilippineAmerican War (1899-1902), the poet laureate of British imperialism Rudyard Kipling addressed his American in-laws with a poem The White Man`s Burden (1899), exhorting America to take control of the Filipino nation.  
  
Its verses carry an eerie resonance even today. It calls on the US `To veil the threat of terror`, and to `Send forth the best ye breed/ Go bind your sons to exile/ To serve your captives` need` those `sullen peoples/ Halfdevil and half-child`.  
  
Kipling warned America to expect disappointment: `And when your goal is nearest/ The end for others sought, /Watch Sloth and heathen Folly/ Bring all your hopes to nought.` Kipling`s next lines are an epitaph for every country that has sent troops to Afghanistan: `The ports ye shall not enter, The roads ye shall not tread,/ Go make them with your living,/ And mark them with your dead! Cruelly, Kipling was called upon to pay that human price himself. When his only son John (who suffered from myopia) was twice rejected by the British army, Kipling used his position to get him admitted. John died in France in September 1915, a month af ter his 18th birthday. Kipling punished himself with this bitter couplet: `If any question why we died,/ Tell them because our f athers lied.  
  
Wars guarantee that sons will continue to be buried because their fathers lied, just as truth will be buried by politicians who continue to lie. Tony Blair repeats his discredited lies about Saddam Hussein`s WMDs. Western leaders parrot each other`s lies about the cyberthreats from Russia and China. Even news channels like the BBC and CNN mouth sponsored propaganda, using the trigger word `terror` to evoke a Pavlovian response from their conditioned viewers.  
  
They are not alone. On Aug 20, Indian Prime Minister Modi laid the foundations for a `new` temple at Somnath another trigger word in Hindutva`s lexicon. He used the occasion to side-swipe Muslims who have beards of a different colour to his: `Forces that strive for destruction and those who follow the ideology of creating empires out of terror candominate for some time, but their existence is never permanent as they cannot suppress humanity forever.` He added: `Somnath temple was destroyed many times, idols were desecrated many times and attempts were made to wipe out its existence. But it came up in its full glory after every destructive attack.  
  
Modi`s phoenix sprouts saffron feathers.  
  
In response, a Taliban leader Shahabuddin Dilawar, short of mentioning that if a chaiwallah can become prime minister, retorted: `India will soon know that the Taliban can run the government`s af fairs smoothly.  
  
Prime Minister Modi`s precipitate attack on a government yet to be formed in Kabul does not surprise many. He sees every Muslim as a target. His Hindutva supporters would dearly have liked to have seen their Olympic gold medallist Neeraj Chopra hurl his javelin, straight into the heart of his Pakistani rival Arshad Nadeem. Chopra deserves a second gold medal for this courageous admonition to his countrymen: `Please do not use my name to push a dirty agenda, he said, `...and my comments as a medium tofurther your vested interests and propaganda`.  
  
Hopefully, Neeraj`s sportsmanship will not bring a frown to PM Modi`s brow, nor will he suffer the damaging repercussions to his career that the broadcaster Karan Thapar has.  
  
In his fortnightlyarticle in Aszan Age, Thapar reminded Modi that his declaration of Aug 14 (in Pakistan, Independence Day) as Partition Horrors Remembrance Day was `a selective remembrance`. The `ethnic cleansing` of Muslims from Jammu city in 1947 had been ignored.  
  
Thapar concluded with this question: `Now that Mr Modi wants to remember the horrors of partition,is this one of them?` This was one barb too many, especially after Thapar`s earlier confrontational interview of Modi over the 2002 Godhra massacre of Muslims. The owners of Asian Age were told to spear Thapar. They obliged, obediently as K.K. Birla did when he removed his editor B.G. Verghese during Mrs Indira Gandhi`s Emergency, and when, at Modi`s behest, Hindustan Times owner Shobhana Bhartia removed its editor Bobby Ghosh in 2017.  
  
Thapar should have known better.  
  
Governments like Modi`s burn newspapers to stoke funeral pyres. The writer is an author.  
  
www.fsaijazuddin.pk