**Politics of war and plunder**

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January 22, 2020

Plunder and pillage has always been one of the main objectives of wars and aggressions. Throughout human history, this obnoxious tool of destruction has been employed to extract wealth and treasure from enemies in the form of material goods and human labour.

Almost all territorial powers have resorted to wars and aggression to amass wealth through plundering their enemies’ territories.

The Persians, Arabs and Mongols were some of the nations from the East that captured large swaths of territories in various parts of the world, forming large empires spreading over not only the present-day eastern regions but Western parts of the world as well. The Mongols established one of the largest land-based empires in the world. Though their ruthless attacks were largely directed towards the kingdoms of the East, some Western regions also surrendered before the mighty nomadic tribes that had a strange penchant for blood and massacre. The case of the Byzantine, the Ottomans and the Russians is puzzling as some historians consider them Eastern powers while others assert they were Western.

Though the Byzantine was the part of Roman Empire, it continued to exist even after the fall of Rome, retaining its unique imperial grandeur and lasting almost 1000 years. In terms of time, it is the longest empire in human history. The centre of Ottoman power was based in what some geographers might call the West but they were originally from Asia, not only embracing an Eastern religion but also ardently propagating it.

Russia seems to be a stepchild of the West that has often outcast it, considering it a foreign power that was bent on conquering Europe. Despite the fact that the royal family of Russia, before the socialist revolution of 1917, had close family ties with Western ruling elite, the West never considered it its own. Even today it is described as a hegemonic power that threatens the smaller states of Europe and is ready to use military might to assert its authority in global affairs.

So, from the East it was mainly four nations or empires that threatened Europe in one or another way; the Persian, the Arab, the Mongol and the Ottoman. The Persian empire conquered parts of Greece, emerging as a threat to the Western world of the ancient times while the Ottoman, the Arab and the Mongol empires also attacked the West several times but did not succeed in subjugating the present- day Western Europe that is the centre of modern civilisation.

One may justify these forays from the East into various parts of Europe on different pretexts but they were primarily expansionistic and imperialistic in nature and were meant for loot and plunder. The splendid forts and castles of ancient Persia, the pomp and glory of Damascus and Baghdad and the fascinating majestic wealth of Istanbul were all in some way the result of the plundering that imperial powers carried out in various parts of the world.77

After the collapse of the Roman Empire, Europe found itself mired in a political quagmire with no central authority to control the over-crowded continent. Hordes of barbarian tribes ransacked various parts of the continent and such attacks remained unabated even after the conversion of these tribes into Christianity. The Christian religious leadership of the time was extremely concerned over these internecine wars, coming up with the idea of finding a common enemy, which partly triggered the crusades.

The crusaders may have been zealot believers but their fanatical wars cannot hide the ravage and pillage that they carried out in the name of religion. They not only targeted Muslims, seizing their properties, businesses and wealth but also robbed Jewish and Christian areas. They had a voracious greed for wealth which did not even spare the Byzantine Empire that had invited them to fight Muslims and liberate the holy places.

These holy expeditions greatly transformed Europe which was considered an over-crowded and impoverished continent at the time. It exposed the riches of the Eastern world to them, prompting them partially to venture out of their continent and explore the world. Such explorations, started in 1492, were not without naked exploitation and outright plundering with the Westerners pilfering tons of gold and silver from the Americas empires of the Aztec, the Maya and the Inca. The race for colonization triggered a spree of human killing, decimating millions of people in the Americas, Africa, Asia and other parts of the world.

The race was also meant to grab the wealth of colonized nations. Just the UK is accused of stealing around 45 trillion dollars from India while black activists are demanding reparation of four-trillion-dollars from slave trading nations. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

The scramble for Africa and other rivalries culminated in the First World War, leading to the killing of more than ten million people. The second great massacre of 1939-45 incinerated around 70 million souls besides annihilating several cities and towns. Both wars were nothing but a struggle between various global and regional powers to grab the resources of other states or capture markets. During the cold war, this ravage continued in one way or another with the Western ruling elites toppling governments in the third world that did not allow the exploitation of their natural resources.

After the end of the USSR, the triumphant Western world declared that it would not tolerate any state that hampered the free movement of capital or jeopardise the interest of Western companies. Yugoslavia was taught a tough lesson when it challenged the Western powers.

Later, they came up with the idea of regime change. Any government that does not want to allow carte blanch to Western monopolies would be wiped out on one or another pretext. Now, these powers want everything at the mercy of the market – from industries to commerce and services to utilities.

One of the reasons for the destruction of Iraq, Libya and Syria lies in their refusal to leave everything in the hands of Western corporations. Any country with natural resources or mineral wealth will have to be subjugated for the sake of monopolies’ interests. Those who resist would be ousted like Evo of Bolivia. In states where the Western powers cannot kick out a hated leader, they create chaos – which is what they are doing in Venezuela.

Iran sits on the fourth largest oil reserves in the world besides being the second largest producer of oil. So, it cannot be left at the whims of clerics from Qom. Any move to dislodge the theocratic government of the Islamic Republic would not be meant to liberate the Iranians but to capture its oil and gas resources besides taking control of one of the most important choke points of the world.

It is naïve to believe that wars and aggressions can accomplish anything but an agenda of loot and plunder. Death and destruction are the surplus gifts of these inhuman expeditions. What is painful is the silence of the people in the Western world. One wonders how long the ruling elite of the West will continue sowing the seeds of chaos and anarchy in the name of freedom, liberty and democracy.

It is time the people of the West started viewing wars and aggression as tool of pillage and pilferage instead of subscribing to the ideas of their ruling elites who just want to grab the mineral wealth of third world countries. This will also happen in the case of Iran if the Islamic Republic is ever attacked or a formula of regime change is ever applied.

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