Going To War To Create Peace?

FOR those of us fortunate to be living our lives a considerable distance away from the war in Afghanistan, there is a certain irony present in the events of the past week. Plainly put, is it possible justify the creation of peace by going to war? There must be casualties in any war no matter the precautions taken to minimise collateral damage, and the inevitable loss of life.

There is talk of a humanitarian catastrophe of immense proportions because of the fallout from hostilities combined with the ravages of a crippling drought in Afghanistan. There are suggestions that food drops will not adequately address the situation. Women and children are being maimed in these punitive strikes despite denials by the US, and the western world seems united that this is the way to fight terrorism.

The barbarity of the Middle Ages is with us right now, except that death and destruction is being dispensed at the press of a button in the clinical surrounds of control-rooms thousands of miles away. If Osama Bin Laden was the real target, then real soldiers, with real courage should have been sent to his lair, to seek him out. There would hardly have been any collateral damage or civilian casualties. But America has no longer got the nerve for real combat. Instead it conducts war games with 'play-stations'.

Waging war is no way to fight terrorism! Bombing civilians and then trying to win their support with food parcels is anything but civilized in anyone's language! If the total cost of the hardware, the munitions and the personnel committed to the conflict were quantified, then much more would have been achieved by spending that kind of money on programmes to win the minds and hearts of the Muslim world in a tangible and meaningful way.

At the moment the Muslim world is being incensed to the point that the gains the US are hoping to make, will be transformed into even more anti-American sentiments. We have seen how these simmering feelings of alienation have manifested themselves on 11 September, 2001.

The world does not need more of the same, and the present American campaign will merely reduce Afghanistan to rubble. The result will then be that they (USA) will fund reconstruction under a government of their liking, until new feelings of alienation lead to yet another generation of hostilities, because the US listens to no one but itself.

Like the Roman Empire, the USA will, indeed, must, implode as a world power, because of its outward-looking tendencies. Finding fault outside its boundaries, failing to engage in any introspection, and gradually moving towards a society hamstrung by curbs on the very freedoms that its claims to champion, will lead to its own destruction. The signs are already there.

The problem is that America does not see itself to blame for anything in the world to-day. Its people, despite a reasonably powerful media, are largely ignorant of what is done in their name and in their interests, and the administration, with its bullying and arrogant attitude, sees itself as the kings of the world, unchallenged by anyone since the demise of the Soviet Union, as the balancing power in the world.

I do not wish any harm to the American people, despite their misguided attitudes to peaceful co-existence in a world gradually falling under the thrall of American power, but no one can avoid what it brings upon itself, and therein lies the pity.

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