

## **A QUESTION OF WAR**

*World War I –its terrible carnage almost eliminating the youth of France, Great Britain, Germany-became to the victors ‘the War to end War’ and for those who caused the conflagration, break-up of nation-states new borders, reparations and the dictates of Versailles. Born was the idea of a League of Nations – a collection of member states to arbitrate, negotiate and promote an aura of peace-an American idea whose President led the crusade, losing via his fatal disability and a recalcitrant Congress. Despite disarmament of major participants, an abortive move to legally outlaw war, “this is not peace, an armistice for twenty years”, as Marshal Foch of France ruminated. Revived, Germany returned with a vengeance.*

*World War II fit the criterion of the good war as Japan and Germany hegemony over its neighbors was the rationale of its ideology, economic needs and vengeance for presumed wrongs of others. While the former gobbled up much of Asia, the German defeated most of Europe and attacked the Soviet Union (Russia). As America, ostensibly neutral, aided England, then alone, Japan in a strategic coup attacked the American base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaiian environs leaving the American fleet in wreckage, mostly battleships and tenders. In consultation, Roosevelt and Churchill believed. Unconditional Surrender their strategy and without any equivocation totally defeated Germany and Japan. From the ashes, and help from America, Great Britain, others the two fanatic military regimes became a model democracy. Spawned, the Soviet Union in the vacuum saw opportunity for hegemony via militant communism.*

*To thwart Soviet moves, America took steps to contain them leading to the Cold War and adversarial posturing backed up by nuclear arsenals.*

*Proxies, perhaps of the larger confrontation were Limited Wars (Korea and Vietnam) as ‘ignorant armies clashed by night’ recalling colonial wars with a hope of national independence. Korea still divided and Vietnam a whole. Ideological wars to contain Communism.*

*So we can say that wars seldom show winners and losers and that negotiated peace and armistice-like arrangements are fraught with ambiguities. Troubling! The never-ending wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have revealed incomplete strategies, an inability to really pinpoint the enemy, be it terrorism (un-definable) crazy ethnic rivalries and, of course, Islamic intransigence.*

*Since we have no strategy for victory, only some success via perfected counter-insurgency (invest, contain, stay and build) in both places seemingly requires a long tactical and logistical mission therein, it is moot as to any claim of victory. Much as earlier wars, means and ends were not reconciled, our narrative has been lost. Tactical success has been trumped by strategic inertia.*

*George Bush had the moment and opportunity moving quickly on the Taliban and al-Qaeda in retaliation of 9/11, but this was a tactical win of extraordinary conception, surprise, speed and expertise and he called them terrorists (a misnomer) rather than Islamic fanatics in his message....which may have curtailed a strategy to take on those Arabic nations who harbored these people, discuss in clear language, face to face, the cancer of militant Islam within their territories, the hate within the madrassas and mosques, and remind them their moderate and less than moderate regimes were targets too, from within. A death knell perhaps hidden in the aura of so-called Arab Spring and the uprisings.*

*Islam despite the citations of peace and solitude is the problem: Osama bin-Laden, a Sunni, angered by the American presence in Saudi Arabia (Gulf One) was a disciple of Taymiyya, Wahhab, al-Banna and Qutbpure Islamists seeking to restore a caliphate to support their jihad, and Iran's Ahmadinejad, a Shiite, extols the Twelfth Imam, the messianic Mahdi to 'cleanse the world of deceit and mischief'... apocalyptic end!*

*'To forget the lessons of history will cause us to repeat them'(Santayana). Let us keep powder dry!*