

# American Scene

## *America's Losing Streak*

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

While the United States of America is considered as the only superpower that exists today, the fact remains that it hasn't won wars since WW II (in 1945). Only the Gulf War in 1991 under the leadership of George W H Bush can be called a clear success. The Korean War was inconclusive, Vietnam was a loss costing 58,000 Americans and millions of Vietnamese lives. Both Iraq and Afghanistan wars proved to be futile with a price tag of 5 trillion dollars and 7,000 American lives.

In addition, the U.S. has failed to change regimes in Cuba and Venezuela in its own backyard despite trying to do so for decades. We all know about the failed invasion of The Bay of Pigs in 1961. In this century alone, the U.S. has miserably failed to contain, China, North Korea, and Iran while those countries keep on sticking the thumb in the U.S.A.'s eye.

There can be many reasons for the U.S.'s failure in this regard. First and foremost, the recent U.S. presidents with the exception of George W H Bush (41st) have been novices, unready, and without enough experience for the rigor of their office compared to their counterparts in other countries who are seasoned and have been there for decades. The U.S. leadership is no match to them when it comes to strategic judgment. In the United States, a peanut farmer or a builder can



suddenly become the Commander-in-chief to face the seasoned veterans of China, Russia, or even North Korea.

Secondly, the U.S. is considered an undependable partner even by its own allies such

as Turkey and Germany. Its foreign policy takes a drastic change after a new president is sworn in. Mr. Biden's rushed reversal of Trump's policies with his executive orders is a recent example of such a move. Much of the rest of the world seems visibly queasy at the prospect of America's U-turn. Just the other day, the U.S. navy violated India's sovereignty by carrying out a Freedom of Navigation operation west of Lakshadweep Islands, inside India's exclusive economic zone, without requesting India's prior consent. This is just one example of America's mood swing. By the way, India never wholeheartedly trusted America except for a brief period during the Modi-Trump bromance between 2016 and 2020. In contrast to that, Russia has always been there for India as a reliable partner.

This vitality is uncommon when we examine Russia, China, Germany, North Korea to name a few. Much of the world, however, is not accustomed to such volatility. "The rest of Western Europe has seen numerous changes in those who hold the reins of power, but oscillations in governance have generally stayed within a relatively narrow political spectrum."

Feffer, John (2021 February “America: The Unreliable Superpower” Foreign Policy in Focus.

Central Asia and the Middle East including Iran are opening up to engagement with China. These countries are already making business and strategic partnerships with China which is viewed by them as more stable and trustworthy. Saudi Arabia is now getting closer to Russia. Both Saudi Arabia and India recently bought an advanced Russian missile system to the dismay of the United States.

Last but not the least, many a time the U.S. wages wars on false pretenses. For example, President Johnson received congressional authorization in 1964 to begin the massive escalation in Vietnam in response to an alleged attack by the North Vietnamese on an American ship in the Gulf of Tonkin. It turned out to be a false assumption. Similarly, in 2001, Iraq was falsely accused of amassing weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It turned out that Iraq didn't possess WMDs and had not collaborated to destroy the World Trade Center in 2001. Oops!

The problem is that the U.S. doesn't seem to learn from its past mistakes. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the American military repeated many of the mistakes it made in Vietnam. “The U.S. ignores the historical framework within which insurgencies take place, to appreciate the cultural and political factors of other nations and people, and to understand warfare beyond the limited confines of tactics and operations. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may have been ill-advised, but both were winnable with the right strategy. As for Libya, the United States and its allies lost by default when they walked off the playing field.” (Source: “Mansoor, Peter R (2016, March 10)” Why Can't America Win Its Wars?” Hoover Institution)

Whatever be the reason it all boils down to leadership at the top. “The buck stops here.” It is time for America to learn from its past mistakes and make correct decisions in the future. Although times have changed, the David and Goliath story still holds true today.

