

Bedouin on the Move

The fall of Ben Ali's brutal regime in Tunisia had an electrifying effect throughout the Arab world. Protests broke out across Algeria, during four days of massive agitation in early January, hundreds of people had been injured by police and at least three killed. Large-scale street demonstrations also shook Yemen as well—the poorest country in the region. Then a massive and courageous uprising, having no parallel in recent Arab history, erupted in Egypt—the most populous Arab country—with the youth at the forefront. And now Libya. An armed rebellion against colonel Gaddafi led to a situation in which civilians were dying in hundreds in cross-fire. As NATO forces have begun bombing Gaddafi's strongholds, after getting sanction from UN Security Council, one can see a rerun of Iraq scenario in the desert with the final aim of regime change. That UN means US is a fact of life. In other words it's still a unipolar world, not a multi-polar one as claimed by the Chinese. And Obama had no hesitation in declaring the obvious that 'Gaddafi must go'.

Colonel Gaddafi is no friend of revolutionary forces around the world. He may be a benevolent dictator to many of his countrymen. And to many he is an out and out autocrat who has been ruling the desert country, an artificial western construct, since 1969 with iron fists, without allowing any voice of dissent to surface. And his military offensive against the rebels virtually turned Libya into a grand killing field while NATO is all set to send it back to stone age, as they did it in Iraq, literally committing a genocide. How many fled the blood-bath as refugees to neighbouring countries is not known.

Not quite unexpectedly UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-moon welcomed the Security Council's "historic" resolution to authorise the use of "all necessary measures" including the imposition of a no-fly zone ostensibly to protect civilians in Libya and stop Gaddafi's forward march. Also, the League of Arab states played its role by supporting the US move to bomb Libya, all in the name of saving civilians. NATO fighter planes don't distinguish between civilian targets and non-civilian ones. War means misery. And America-sponsored war means devastation. Surprisingly all wings of UN are in praise of the UN Security Council move to cripple Gaddafi by any possible means, fair or foul, once and for all.

What has been going on in areas that were previously held by rebels and then recaptured by Gaddafi's forces is anybody's guess. Those towns and villages cannot be anything but graveyards.

India, China and Russia alongwith Brazil and Germany expressed concerns over NATO air-strikes. But they played it safe by abstaining in voting in US Security Council, while indirectly endorsing US-supported NATO action knowing full well the end result. The veto-wielding China and Russia did the same thing when coalition forces invaded Iraq under the authorisation of UN. China has not yet ever applied its veto power to thwart American and western belligerence on any occasion anywhere in the world. As for India the less said the better. Even during the Vietnam war New Delhi's role was dubious by any standard. And today when it is struggling hard to remain in good book of America no one thinks the government in Delhi would condemn NATO attacks in Libya. The countries that are currently participating in America's mission to Libya code-named 'Operation Odyssey Dawn', are France, Britain, the USA, Canada, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Qatar, Jordan and the UAE.

After so much bloodshed and a virulent campaign against Gaddafi it is unlikely that America could allow any dispensation other than a client state. Libya's east, now under the control of rebels because of backing they have got from NATO military actions, has huge reserves of liquid gold. And it matters a lot to America and major western powers who have

a definite goal to reach. As the UN resolution 1973 doesn't allow any foreign forces in any form America will have to depend on anti-Gaddafi opposition under UN auspices to effect a regime change in Libya.

Not that Gaddafi is a darling of jihadists but as a last resort he tried to cultivate religious fanaticism without any success because his peculiar brand of 'autocratic welfarism' with religious overtone find no favour among fundamentalists.

At one stage America and its western allies tried to eliminate Gaddafi on the spurious ground of his covert support to terrorism, rather terrorism directed at the West. Then somehow Gaddafi reconciled himself with the ground reality and didn't go beyond his limits.

Not that the West had any problem in having access to Libya's Oil. But the point at issue is they want to have total sway over Libya's oil business which Gaddafi has been denying all these years. The defection of Libyan diplomats abroad suggests among other things that Libyans like Egyptians and Tunisians are equally eager to see a changed political atmosphere and Uncle Sam has an excuse to export democracy. Then America cannot feel secure without an enemy, they are always in search of enemy, if there is no visible one, they could always create one. And Gaddafi foots bill at a time when they are planning to withdraw from Afghanistan. □□□