



Towards Democracy or simply the Regime Change in the Middle-east and North Africa: The Double Stands of Imperialism

Abstract

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BRICS countries-India, China, Russia, Brazil and South Africa passed a resolution that no military intervention of any sort should be resorted to by the United States, France or NATO. This is the high time the BRICS and African Union countries take strong steps to hold the uncalled for aggression in order to protect the sovereignty of Libya and the lives of millions of Libyans. The air strikes in Libya by France, the USA and the NATO has positioned its warships off the coast of Libya. There is talk of imposing a 'no fly zone' over Libya. The imperialist powers are interested mainly in the oil wealth of Libya and seek to utilize the revolt against the Gaddafi regime to pursue their own interests.

Introduction

The assault on Libya began on March 19 2011. The UN Security Council resolution 1973 provided the cover for this aggression against a sovereign country. The resolution had called for a no-fly zone to be imposed over Libya. The resolution was so worded as to provide the pretext for an outright intervention when it talked about taking other necessary measures to protect civilians. Seizing this opportunity, all military installations in Libya have been bombarded; from imposing the so-called no-fly zone, the next step was air strikes against Gaddafi's armed forces on the ground. By this, the military might of NATO has been thrown behind the rebels. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and African Union condemn the air strikes in Libya by the USA and France. The Third World Social Forum also expressed its strong opposition to the moves for military intervention in Libya by the United States, Britain, France and the NATO. The United States has positioned its warships off the coast of Libya. There is talk of imposing a 'no fly zone' over Libya. Both the US and the British government leaders have talked about using all options to end the crisis in Libya. It is for the people of Libya to decide how to resolve their problems and what type of political system they require. The US and its allies have no right whatsoever to violate the sovereignty of Libya in the name of humanitarian intervention. Just as in Iraq earlier (*where more than one million people have lost their lives due to war and criminal blocked by the wild aggressiveness of the USA*), the western powers are interested mainly in the

oil wealth of Libya and seek to utilize the revolt against the Gaddafi regime to pursue their own interests.

History of Imperialist aggression

Exactly, a hundred years ago, the world witnessed the first instance of an aerial bombardment, ie, of a plane dropping bombs on targets on the ground. On October 26, 1911, Italian planes dropped bombs near Tripoli on Turkish troops. Libya was then part of the Ottoman Empire. Italy subsequently colonized Libya. The Libyan people fought the Italian colonizers valiantly. In the 1920s, Mussolini's Italy used airplanes to strafe and kill thousands of tribal fighters on horseback. A hundred years later, Libya was subjected to a massive aerial bombardment by planes and ships belonging to the United States, France and Britain. Italy did not join in, as that would have raised the specter of its barbarous colonial history, but many of the allied planes took off from an air base in Italy. The cynical claim of the Western powers is that these air strikes are meant to protect civilians in Libya when precisely more ten thousands have died in this bombardment.

NATO supplied huge dangerous arms to the rebels. France and Britain were in the lead in calling for a war on Libya. For them, the UN Security Council resolution meant a license to go all out to remove Gaddafi. British government officials have said that the killing of the Libyan leader would be legal, if it prevented civilian

deaths as laid out in the UN resolution. Given the different interpretations of the aim of the military intervention and growing misgivings among some of the NATO allies themselves, finally it was decided to handover the control of the operations to the NATO. What Fidel Castro warned at the outset has come true: NATO committed aggression on Libya.

While NATO continues its military strikes in Libya to “protect civilians”, the despotic regimes in Yemen and Bahrain are allowed to kill and maim its peoples. The president of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, is a valued ally of the West and Bahrain hosts the Fifth Fleet of the United States. Their civilians are, therefore, expandable.

If the West’s double standards are so visible, the hypocrisy of president Obama is truly breathtaking. Invested with the Nobel Peace prize, Obama is desperately trying to hide his warmongering. In a recent speech, he declared: *“We will deny the regime arms, cut off its supply of cash, assist the opposition and work with other nations to hasten the day when Gaddafi leaves power”*. In the same breath, he said: *“If we try to overthrow Gaddafi by force, our coalition would splinter”*.

The differences in the coalition on this so-called-*“humanitarian intervention”* have also surfaced. With the NATO taking charge, Germany has pulled out its two naval frigates and AWACS surveillance planes. Germany was one of the five countries in the Security Council which abstained on the resolution on Libya. Turkey, another partner in the NATO, has disapproved of the military intervention going beyond the no-fly zone and has announced that it will not commit its forces in Libya.

At the recently-held conference on Libya in London, though it was claimed that the Arab League was represented, neither its secretary general nor many of the Arab countries, including Egypt and Algeria, participated. It is only the client States like UAE and Qatar which spoke for the Arab countries. The US and Britain have started talking about supplying arms to the rebels. At the same time, the NATO commander has indicated that Islamic fundamentalists and Al Qaeda may be present in the ranks of the rebels. NATO has also the job to create a pro-Western alternative government.

The NATO intervention is a calculated and cynical move to reverse the popular uprisings taking place in the Arab world and to hijack it in the name of a humanitarian intervention against an authoritarian regime. The Gaddafi regime which had made up with the West in 2003 and become a favourite of the Britain and other Western countries and who had laid out the red carpet for the oil multinationals is now being demonized, just as Saddam Hussein was in Iraq.

The West is fuelling a civil war. Libya is being forced down a path of destruction. In India, the military intervention by NATO has been condemned by all sections in parliament. The Indian government did right in abstaining on the UN Security Council resolution. But that is not enough. Along with the four other countries – Russia, China, Germany and Brazil – India should demand an urgent review of how the Security Council resolution is being implemented. The US and NATO cannot hijack the United Nations mandate in this manner.

Obama's justification of the attack on Libya once again exposes the double-speak of the imperialist forces on regime change. Imperialism's double standards become clear with the US-inspired Saudi Arabian military intervention in Bahrain to prop up the Khalifa, intensely opposed by the people who are seeking better standards of livelihood along with human rights and democracy. In Libya, imperialism seeks a regime change and in Bahrain it seeks to sustain the autocratic rule of the Khalifa family that has lorded over the country since 1783. Both interventions are ironically in the name of protecting the people. The reason for such a double standard is not far to seek. Bahrain is home to the US navy's fifth fleet and has been its steadfast ally. Libya on the other hand, is not such a firm ally. Further, Libyan oil reserves and importantly the ocean of fossil water reserves on which its deserts lie today have the potential of more lucrative profits than oil. A regime change here could well be to imperialism's advantage, while in Bahrain it is not.

Imperialism Betraying a Predatory Character

Imperialism today is betraying a predatory character not often seen in the recent past. As Marx pointed out in *Das Capital*, *“With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent will ensure its employment*

anywhere; 20 per cent will produce eagerness; 50 per cent, positive audacity; 100 per cent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 per cent and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged”.

All through the history of imperialism, accumulation took place in two ways: one is through the normal dynamics of capital expansion (appropriation), through the unfolding of its production process and the other is through coercion (expropriation) whose brutality Marx defines as primitive accumulation of capital. Historically, these two processes continue to coexist. The process of primitive accumulation has taken various forms, including direct colonisation. In Marxist conceptualisation, primitive is not meant in the historic frame of 'primitive and modern' but in an analytical frame, where being primitive means being brutal. “In the current phase, the hallmark of contemporary imperialism is the intensification of such brutal primitive accumulation assaulting a vast majority of the people of the world's population, both in the developed as well as in all other countries. Imperialism in this current era is the process of accumulation through expropriation rather appropriation. This naked urge for profit maximisation explains the genesis and nature of the present crisis and also the manner in which it is seeking solution.

The world so far was familiar with bailout packages for resurrecting financial giants that collapsed in the wake of their own making. The reckless creation of new financial animals and mind boggling intermeshing of these to generate higher profits led to large scale bankruptcies. As is the logic of capitalism, the governments rescued the corporate giants by building up a mounting debt of their own. The governments that bailed out these corporates are now caught in the vortex of mounting debt. If corporate insolvency heralded the global meltdown and recession in 2008, it is this sovereign insolvency that is threatening to snowball a deeper crisis. Thus, what had started as the crisis due to the insolvency of some corporates has now emerged as full fledged sovereign insolvency?

Instead of undertaking poverty alleviation measures and increasing the purchasing power of people, the governments are trying to manage their finances and prevent insolvencies by

drastically cutting down on expenditures and significantly increasing their revenues. The former means that the livelihood standards of the majority of the working people are bound to deteriorate because there will be more cuts in the social benefit expenditures. The IMF sponsored 'austerity' packages introduced in many of the European countries are part of these efforts and these have resulted in drastic cuts to the social welfare budgets. IMF, which has given loans to many countries, imposed several conditions and had directed the governments to rein in their fiscal deficit. It had urged the governments not to succumb to the protests demanding the reversal of austerity measures. Moreover, it had asked them to get the annual budget approved by it before introducing in their respective parliaments. This is nothing but a brazen attack on the sovereignty of the respective countries. The dominant imperialist powers are seeking their way out of the economic crisis not only by putting greater burdens on the working people of their countries but also by seeking to penetrate and dominate the markets of developing countries. Efforts are on to coerce the developing countries to accept the various conditions and agreements that are detrimental to their interests.

One of the characters of imperialism in this era of global finance is, thus, to launch an all-out attack on the democratic advances made by human civilisation and this, in today's context means an out and out attack on the welfare State, as we are witnessing in Europe. The thousands of people coming out on the streets in various parts of the world – the workers demonstrations in the US, the huge march organised in London and many similar protests – testify to the rising discontent among the people. However, one important aspect that needs to be remembered is that most of these struggles are defensive in nature, in the sense that they aim to safeguard their hard won benefits. Tracing the reasons for the protests in Middle East, it is this attack on the livelihoods of the people of Middle East that had led, amongst other factors, to the present unrest and mobilised people in such huge numbers. Apart from being subjected to authoritarian rule for decades, the people of these countries have suffered severely during the last two years of the global economic crisis.

This economic onslaught of imperialism is accompanied by an intense ideological onslaught

that essentially argues that it only economics that determines politics and not politics that determines economics. In this manner, they try to separate politics from economics and hence try to ensure the economic power of imperialism to hegemonies the entire humanity goes unhindered. They argue, for this reason, 'do not politicise economic reforms', 'let there be unanimity', in what essentially is the implementation of a neo-liberal economic order. In this way, they try to de-politicise the society in order to ensure that the popular urge of the people and their striking power is muted. Also, in this process, these campaigns try to suck into its vortex all the hitherto known third world nationalism and seek to negate any relevance to Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

While understanding the economic power of imperialism, it is necessary for us to know that it is not possible to realise universal human values and human rights in their real sense under the current system. No amount of reform or tinkering can prevent or stop capital's irresistible

urge for global domination, which in real terms means trampling upon human rights and values. Thus, for achieving human rights and realising universal values of humaneness, we need to seek transcendence of the capitalist system. This can be achieved only by strengthening the Left forces, because, it is the Left and Left alone that has the agenda of transcending the system and build a system bereft of all kinds of exploitation.

This is the high time the Third World countries take strong steps to hold the uncalled for aggression in order to protect the sovereignty of Libya and the lives of millions of Libyans. Let the people of Libya decide their destiny and the UN should take the lead, and role of big five has to be pro active, so as to redeem the credibility of UN as an agency representing the entire world. India, China, Russia, Brazil and African Union should unambiguously declare that no military intervention of any sort should be resorted to by the United States, France or NATO.