

The Libyan denouement?

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THE Odyssey is one of two major ancient Greek epic poems attributed to Homer. The poem is fundamental component to the modern Western canon. Now that odyssey is the code name of the latest US military operation in Libya-Odyssey Dawn. The present word odyssey is very much linked to the mythical hero Odysseus. International Relations, more specifically Strategic Studies, never got such a similar literary taste or dimension before this. The US may be assuming its operation in Libya is going to be a prolonged and protracted, one with hardship and tough resistance ahead. It is almost like a ten years long journey, which once was carried out by Odysseus way back to 8th century BC to get back to his beloved family after returning from Trojan War. Is Libya aggression going to be another "Odyssey journey" for the US and thus for other European

powers to set off a war and "leading them from the behind". On Iran issue it was revealed by some ex-security and military personnel that the US viewed Iran as a part of succession of military operations. Former NATO commander General Wesley Clark (1997-2000) said the Pentagon's military road-map consisted of a sequence of countries: beginning with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia and Sudan-a five year plan. Is Libya invasion not the continuation of the US belligerent policy?

Flurry of questions already has arisen why it was not the US but France that initiated the war followed by Britain. I think oil politics is very active here behind the aggression. There is a simple data table on Libyan oil and its relation with western powers. This will give us real clue to the causes of comprehensive involvement of European countries led by France and the US pushing from behind.

Libya's Main Petroleum Export Partners

Countries	Italy	Germany	France	Spain	USA
Export (%)	37.65	10.11	8.44	7.94	5.27

partners? More captivatingly, from the US perspective, this time the US successfully won a negotiation over Libya issue convincing European

From popular perspective the war is totally unwelcomed by the Libyans even if they are repressed by Colonel Gaddafi. In one of the video footages on Al-jazeera

The man was telling that the Libyans need no oil. If the westerns need oil Libyans are happy to give them but please let them live alone from those western war mongers and from war. Who is there on earth to listen to these innocents?



UPROOTED PALESTINIANS

(dated 20th March), day after the first aerial attack, I found people from Bengazi are outspokenly telling the true story of double standard, historically continued, shown by western powers. Once they gave weapons to Gaddafi and now Gaddafi is targeting those weapons against general people. The man was telling that the Libyans need no oil. If the westerns need oil Libyans are happy to give them but please let them live alone from those western war mongers and from war. Who is there on earth to listen to these innocents?

What is the reality or outcome of this ongoing war? The power parity between two parties is totally asymmetrical. Libya on the one hand lonely with poor military capability and western powers on the other hand with military state-of-the-art technologies. So it is going to be another one-sided monopoly business. Libya's navy is small and is of little consequence. The army has more than 40,000 troops, but half of these are conscripts and largely incompetent. The most effective unit is the elite 32nd brigade, with around 4,000 well-equipped and loyal troops. There are also mercenaries in varying numbers being imported, who however would depart rapidly in the face of any substantive reversals. Libya's air-force has over 300 combat-

aircraft, but most are Soviet-era planes with a limited capability, and many are in storage.

The problem for Gaddafi is that he has enemies, more inside than outside. So it is going to be a double battle for him. The larger strategic issue is that the Gaddafi regime will only survive beyond the short term if it regains control of most of Libya's oil-and-gas industry. At this moment these are mostly under the control of rebellions. These resources are widely scattered; most of the energy fields are in the east and southeast of the country which accounts for around 80% of current production, with the remaining fields south of Tripoli in the west.

The western powers may have military superiority but the thing won't be easier in the ground battle. May be Gaddafi is holding his nerve for the coming days when the battle will come down from the air to ground. There is already a speculation that Gaddafi may have reserve of chemical weapons. And he may use it as weapon of last resort. But it is a speculation. And there are gulf of differences between reality and speculation. As per as reality is concerned we can say that the dusk of Gaddafi era is not far away.

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Sino-Pak nuclear deal: American perfidy?

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IF the US changing the rules of the nuclear world order for facilitating a civilian nuclear deal with India was a case of global hegemony in action, then China's recent success in getting the Americans to acquiesce to a Sino-Pak civilian nuclear deal is the equivalent of a successful insurgent action.

The fact that the deal comes at a time when the world is still reeling from the radiation leak at the Fukushima plant in Japan following the massive earthquake there earlier this month, is deeply ironic. It is also a sign perhaps of how commercial nuclear energy development is driven, in some parts of the world at least, by concerns more important than issues of safety both of the reactor itself and

light or whether it gives cause for still greater indignation, particularly among the nonproliferation lobbies in the US, remains to be seen.

In this context then, American declarations that the Sino-Pak deal is now acceptable owing to Pakistan's own massive internal demand for electricity might be mere posturing. Together with the timing of the dropping of American objections, this raises larger questions of American sincerity with respect to Pakistan's legitimate development goals. Why, for example, was the US not willing to acknowledge Pakistan's massive energy shortfall when talk of the Sino-Pak nuclear deal first came up? And does this mean that the US itself will be willing to enter into a civilian nuclear deal with Pakistan?

sistent' with Beijing's NSG commitments. While the US remains the world's preeminent military power in the world and still manages to rile the Chinese simply on the strength of its presence and ability to intervene in China's immediate neighbourhood, the acceptance of the Sino-Pak nuclear deals indicates also American powerlessness to push China beyond a point.

Some might argue that the Sino-Pak nuclear deal is symptomatic of the growing weakness of the American hand vis-à-vis China since the global financial crisis. And that this weakness extends to even the nuclear proliferation agenda so dear to the Democrats could be a matter for still greater concern in Washington and elsewhere. Indeed, what implications does the American acceptance of the Sino-Pak nuclear deal hold for the North Korean nuclear situation? Here again, the US will be dealing with a close Chinese ally that suffers from a massive energy shortfall and the economic and social consequences that go with it.

Coming to India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has been sanguine in the past, saying for example, when queried about a possible US-Pak nuclear deal that it was purely a bilateral matter between them. His government will however view the Sino-Pak nuclear deal with just a little more concern, even if US Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake, declared that India understood the linkage between Pakistan's severe energy shortage and its perilous internal stability situation. But even if New Delhi were to accept the latest deal as being legitimate under the framework of the NPT, ignore nonproliferation concerns related to Pakistan and simply accept a Sino-Pak relationship aimed against India as a fact of life, what will really sour the Indian mood will be the Assistant Secretary's reiteration of China playing 'an important role' in the region.

If the Bush administration could be credited with a sense of the long-term global good when it cut the Gordian knot of unfair regulations that stymied India, as a responsible nuclear power, from accessing the full benefits of nuclear trade and commerce, then the Obama administration's surrender before the Chinese on the Pakistan nuclear deal can be termed the result of a certain lack of spine.

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US general voices concern over Iran-Venezuela ties

THE United States is worried about increasingly close ties between Venezuela and Iran, a top US military official told lawmakers Tuesday.

"My concern, as I look at it, is the fact that there are flights between Iran and Venezuela on a weekly basis, and visas are not required for entrance into Venezuela or Bolivia or Nicaragua," said General Douglas Fraser, head of the US Southern Command.

"So we don't have a lot of visibility in who's visiting and who isn't, and that's really where I see the concerns."

Fraser said there were "growing opportunities for military-to-military connections," but that these were not apparent yet.

Last month, Washington warned Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez against violating international sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, which Western powers believe masks an attempt to build nuclear weapons.

US officials said last month there was no evidence the Chavez regime had violated those sanctions, but Washington is closely examining whether Venezuela's cooperation with Iran on energy issues is a violation.

Chavez and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad both denounced American "imperialism" and called for a "new world order" during recent talks.



Japan stops uncontrolled leak from nuclear plant

An accidental leak of highly radioactive water into the ocean from a Japanese nuclear plant was stopped Wednesday, boosting efforts to contain the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl 25 years ago.

The leak was thought to be a source of spiking radiation levels in the sea, which prompted Japan to announce its first seafood radiation safety standards following the discovery of fish with elevated contamination.

To stop the long-running leak from the Fukushima plant on the Pacific coast, operator TEPCO had injected sodium silicate, a chemical agent known as "water glass", to solidify soil near a cracked pit where the water had been escaping.

The pit, which has a 20-centimetre crack in its wall, is linked to the plant's reactor No. 2, one of several that had their cooling systems disabled by a catastrophic earthquake-tsunami disaster on March 11. "Workers confirmed at 5:38 am (2038 GMT Tuesday) that the water running out of a pit had stopped," Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) said in a statement on Wednesday.

Several unsuccessful attempts had been made to try to plug pipes that run to the pit, using a polymer and even newspapers and sawdust, and an effort to seal the crack with cement had also failed to stop the leak.

Leaking water from the Fukushima plant has reached more than 1,000 millisieverts and is thought to be the source of radioactive iodine-131 readings in the sea that have hit more than 4,000 times the legal limit. Amid increasing unease about water contamination, Japan has imposed a legal limit for radioactive iodine in fish and may widen tests to cover a larger area, after elevated levels were discovered in a fish caught off Ibaraki prefecture, south of the crippled plant.

The stopping of the leak is the first piece of major good news for several days in the battle to control the crisis at the Fukushima plant, where the natural disaster triggered explosions and radiation releases. The contamination has forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people within 20 kilometres (13 miles) of the plant, affected agriculture and fishing, and triggered health scares as far away as Tokyo.

India on Tuesday banned all food imports from Japan, the first country to impose a blanket block. Several countries including China, Singapore and the United States have barred food from some Japanese prefectures. Fishing has been banned within 20 kilometres of the stricken plant, matching the radius of the evacuation zone on land.

TEPCO continued a separate operation to release lower-level radioactive water into the sea to free up urgently needed storage space for water so toxic that it is hampering crucial repair work...

The government is planning a first emergency budget of more than three trillion yen (\$35 billion), Kyodo news agency reported, quoting ruling party politicians saying total spending could top 10 trillion yen.



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of the population living in proximity to it or of threats from non-state actors.

There is also the chance that the Americans are being too clever by half. Global concerns over nuclear energy have increased following the Fukushima incident and the Chinese themselves are reviewing their massive build-up of civilian nuclear power over safety concerns. The Americans might therefore assume that their willingness to let the Sino-Pak nuclear deal go uncontested in the NSG, after several years of opposition, might not necessarily lead to the deal actually fructifying at least in the near term. Whether this calculation might actually take the heat off the US administration from realists inclined to view things in this

Answering the last question in the affirmative would imply two things. One, that the US now believes that Pakistan is no longer a proliferation risk and two, that Pakistan's nuclear assets are well safeguarded and under no threat from extremist elements. Given that the workings of AQ Khan's clandestine network are still not fully known, for the US to accept the first proposition would be a leap of faith just as accepting the second proposition is to willfully ignore the daily reality of bombings and killings that afflict Pakistan.

With respect to China specifically, Washington continues to insist that the construction of the Chashma 3 and 4 reactors in Pakistan, would be 'incon-