

Arab Spring, Libyan war, and exporting democracy

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THE recent Arab Spring truly renders the democratic aspiration of the people of the entire Middle East and North African region. When it was sparked in Tunisia and spread to Egypt, it was just a matter of time for the other dictatorial regimes in this region to face the similar fate. However, for the USA and its allies, the democratic Middle East has always been a hard choice to make. As the political and economic landscape of this region has attached much importance to the global peace and security, the USA and its allies never wanted to loose the grip over this region. Therefore, although the initiation of Arab Spring has jostled the USA and its allies for a while, it did not take much toll for them to come back fine.

well as to profoundly unsettle the Syrian regime. However, what we have experienced in the Arab resurgence so far is clearly a double-faced game played by the US-led allies. And they purposely used the NATO and UN Security Council to achieve their own goals. One would struggle to correlate the reason why NATO should bomb in Libya and why it should not in Bahrain where, like Libya, the police and security forces brutally crushed the peaceful demonstrators who were clearly the majority and asking for a meaningful democratic change. Bahrain is even the worst case where a foreign country (Saudi Arabia) was allowed to send its tanks and armored vehicles to quell the protest. It has to be said that Muammar Gaddafi is one of the heinous characters and weird rulers in the region and there is no reason one should support his regime. But the point has been rather the two different approaches the allied forces took and their pick-and-choose strategy to address the human rights violation issue.

that they have learnt enough lessons from Iraq and Afghan debacle and the mistakes have not been repeated here, analysts say that this top-down exercise of regime change (top down in a sense that the rebels have been armed and protected by the foreign governments and their so-called win over Gaddafi does not seem inclusive) is the same old game and is destined to fail. The propagation that there were no 'foreign troops' in the Libyan soil, hence no allegation of foreign occupation this time, proved ridiculous when the satellite news channels telecast the audio-visual evidences of the presence of foreign forces actively involved in the ground operation.



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The interesting facets of the Arab Spring include the application of a new method of regime-change-game and also how cleverly the United States and its allies have managed to turn the spring in their favor. They have succeeded to prop up the downfall of other friendly dictators and simultaneously have seized the opportunity to unsettle, and if possible to oust, the refractory governments in the region. The success is staggering; on the one hand they have been successful in protecting the governments in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan and on the other very aggressively capitalized the opportunity to oust the Libyan government as

has further raised the suspicion. Besides, the way UN Security Council treated similar atrocities differently hurt its very credibility as a global institution further. UNSC once again proved that it has a discriminatory look at the views of the global events and that the institution is increasingly becoming incapable of serving the interest of nations instead the interest of a certain coterie.

Nevertheless, the apparent success of the 'new' regime change method may not sustain as well. Although the USA and its allies have been confident

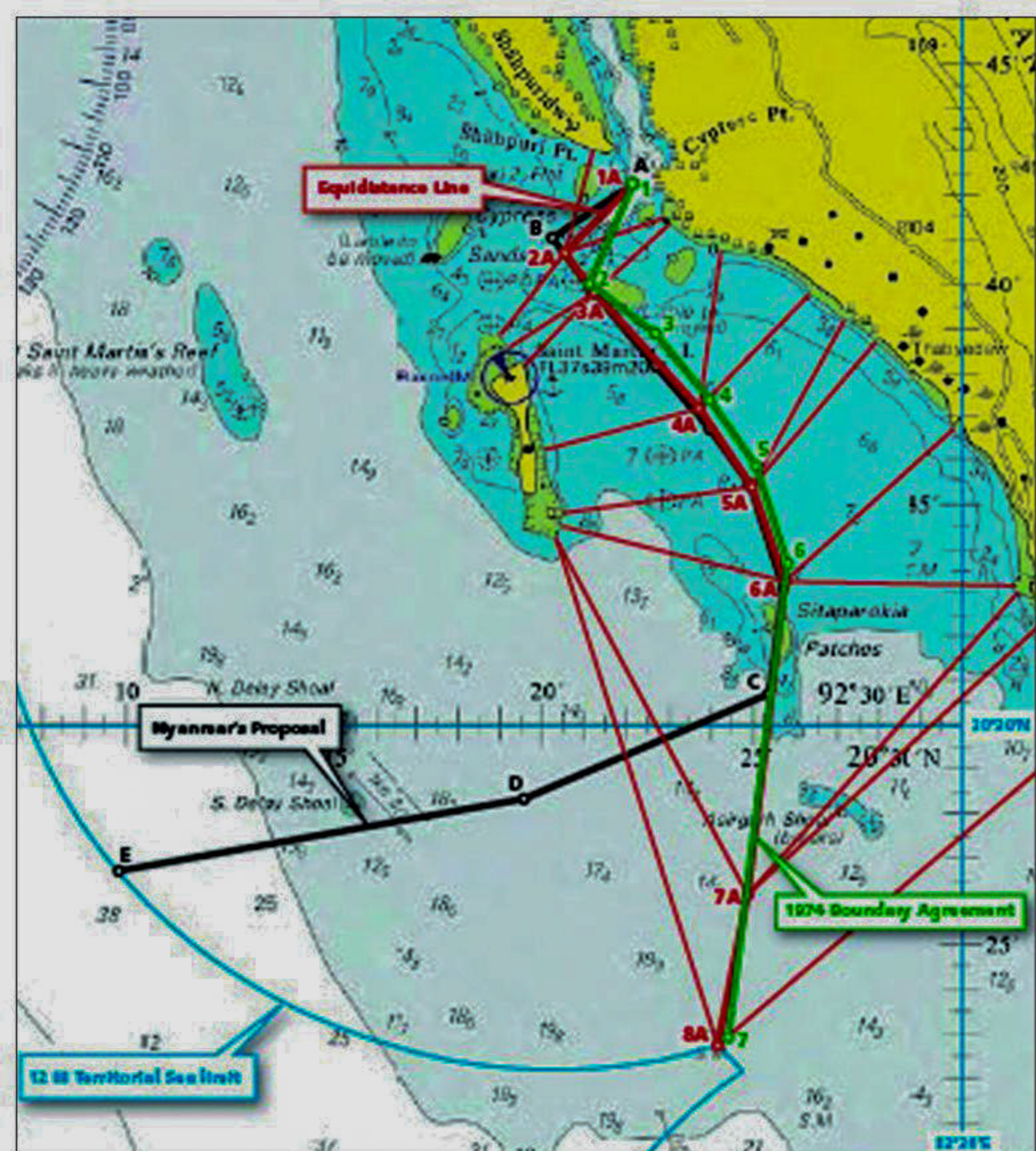
Besides, Gaddafi's strategic retreat without fighting much also causes concerns for the National Transitional Council (NTC) and the allied forces. It seems, not only the USA and its allies have applied the lessons learnt from Iraq and Afghanistan, Gaddafi has learnt and applied a lesson too. While Saddam Hussain and Mulla Omar gave a hard fight to defend their regime until the last moment, which was militarily impossible given the military superiority of the allied forces, Gaddafi approached entirely differently. Gaddafi, unlike Saddam and Mulla Omar, did not try to survive against that superior airpower and exhausted only moderate force to beg his time to relocate and regroup across the borders. He successfully did that in the end and by keeping almost whole of his army intact, he can still pose a good challenge to the NTC. He knows very well that NATO jets cannot protect the NTC government anymore once the rebels are stationed and scattered in the ground. We have to wait and see how far this battle goes.

It is undeniable that the Libyan people have all the legitimate rights to enjoy the fruits of democracy. But what matters most is that the thrust for democracy amongst the countrymen has to be intense and bottom-up. If the people cannot rise up to their democratic aspirations and do not have the ability or agility to challenge the regime within, it will be difficult to say that collectively they are ready for the change. What Egyptian and Tunisian people did in the first place was a very good example of that collective-will where the people, the civil society, and the security forces all the important political actors, have realized the in-built pressures, understood the situation and behaved so far responsibly. We cannot blame the

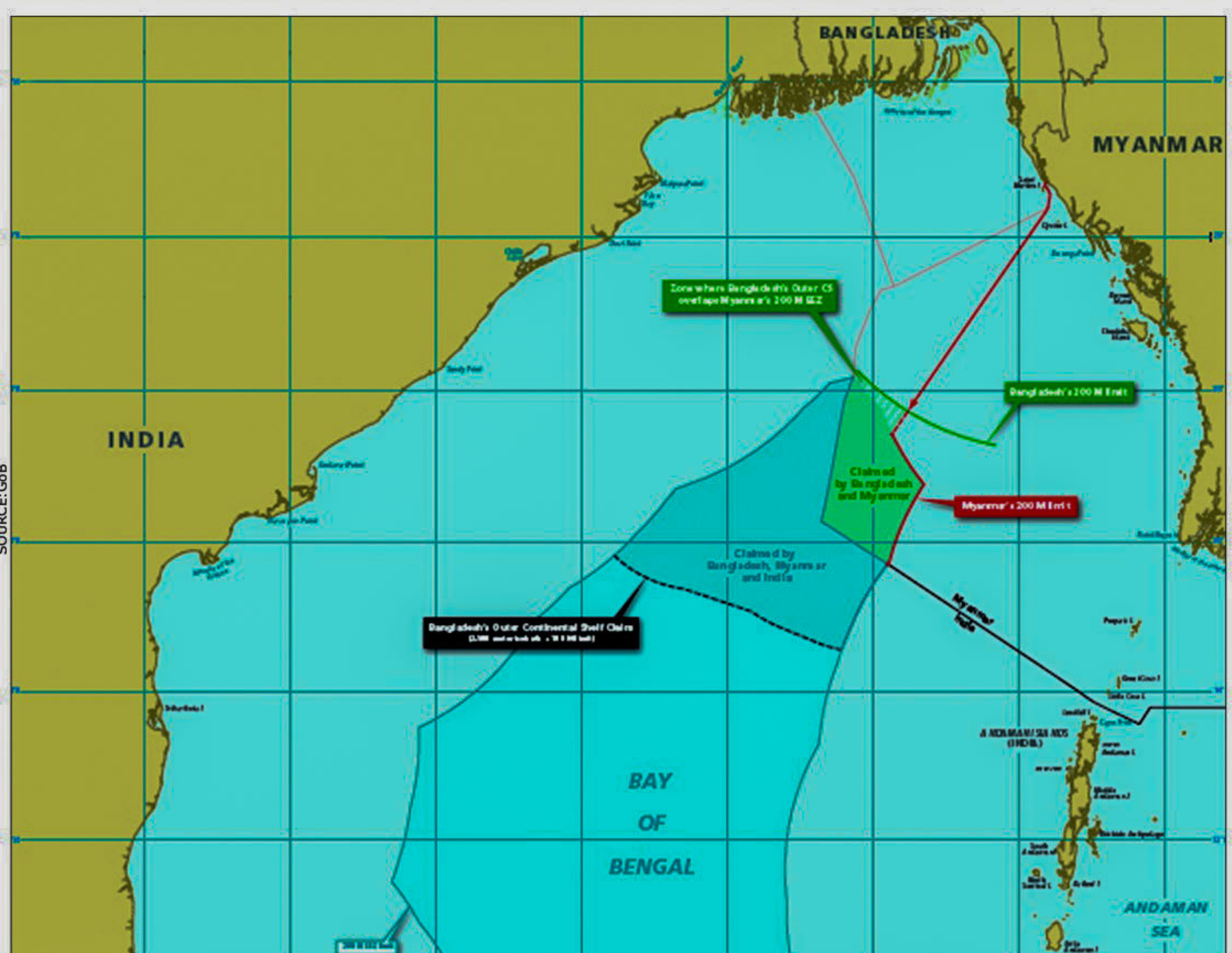
political actors of other countries who do not realize the same. Tunisia and Egypt was the ideal springboard for the Arab democracy. We should have focused on the good side of these revolutions and should have propagated that without much violence, the collective-will can even bring about a big meaningful change. But when people do not bend, ready to fight with their fellow brothers and countrymen with guns and bullets to win their arguments, it has to be realized that the society itself is deeply divided and contains some irreconcilable views. By arming such civilian groups to challenge their regime, we have either completely misunderstood the situation and the dynamics of that particular society, or we have other agendas which we will have to pursue in the name of exporting democracy. The Libya war will surely be judged in that context. What we have to realize is that the surgical top-down installation of democracy like the Iraqi, Afghan or Libyan model cannot offer a sustainable solution in the long run. Such intervening actions rather do more harm than good, derail and endanger the homogenous political processes, and invite more chaos and division within the respective society. The sooner we realize that the better.

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Bangladesh-Myanmar maritime border demarcation



Map 1: Conflicting claims in the territorial sea



Map 2: Bangladesh's proposed delimitation line with Myanmar

The hearing in the case concerning delimitation of the maritime boundary between Bangladesh and Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal has started on 8 September, 2011 at the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS). Both the parties have submitted their claims on maritime boundary entitled to 12 nautical miles of territorial sea and other maritime zones. We are publishing two important maps related to the boundary delimitation between Bangladesh and Myanmar. One (Map: 1) is focused on the conflicting claims in territorial sea which covers 12 nautical miles from the base point. Another (Map: 2) shows the conflicting claims on the boundary in the exclusive economic zone, out to 200 nautical miles and in the outer continental shelf out to 390-460 nautical miles. The hearing will continue upto 24 September, 2011.

U.S. blames Pakistan-based group for attack on embassy in Kabul

JACK HEALY and ALISSA J. RUBIN

KABUL, Afghanistan -- Raising the death toll sharply, American and Afghan officials said Wednesday that the complexity and execution of the siege of the American Embassy and NATO's headquarters in Kabul bore the hallmarks of a militant group based in Pakistan that has become one of the American military's most implacable foes. Gen. John R. Allen, the NATO commander here, said 16

people had been killed in the attack -- 5 Afghan police officers and 11 civilians, including at least 6 children -- double the number reported on Tuesday.

The militant group that he and other officials blamed for the attack, the Haqqani network, is a crucial ally of Al Qaeda in the Pakistani border region and has been a longtime asset of Pakistan's military and intelligence services in Afghanistan. Pakistan's military chiefs have resisted American pressure to go after the Haqqanis, whose primary base is in North Waziristan, part of

Pakistan's tribal areas. Instead, North Waziristan has become a main target of American drone strikes conducted by the Central Intelligence Agency. Some military officials say the Haqqanis have not been hit as hard as they might have been for fear of worsening relations with Pakistan's intelligence agency, so close are its ties to the network. The Pakistan military has done its best to shut down the drone campaign as relations with the United States have soured after the killing of Osama bin Laden by American commandos operating deep inside Pakistan.

The Haqqanis have been blamed for high-profile attacks in Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan, including the bombing of the Indian Embassy in 2008, which killed 54 people. Afterward, American intelligence officials confronted their Pakistani counterparts with evidence that Haqqani fighters had received support and direction from Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services

Intelligence Directorate, or ISI. Hallmarks of attacks linked to the Haqqani network include multiple fighters, targets that are often symbols of the Afghan government and their Western backers, careful planning, and, often, instructions delivered by telephone as the attackers carry out their mission. "The Haqqanis have been attacking Kabul for a long time because Kabul for so much of this country represents not just the spiritual heartland of this country, it represents the future," General Allen said at a briefing. He acknowledged that the insurgents had scored a propaganda victory with the attack, which paralyzed central Kabul, bogged down security forces for hours, and illustrated how the militants still have the ability and the will to attack some of the capital's most heavily guarded areas... (Abridged version)

Source: NY Times.