

Iran standoff, war of words and the Armageddon

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FOR the last couple of years, people have been tired of reading and watching a few phrases in the reports of news-media when it comes to the Middle Eastern (ME) affairs. Iran is trying to build a nuclear weapon and Iran is seeking peaceful uses of nuclear technologies: these are the two contradicting propositions that the news-medias have been feeding their readers/spectators. The first statement is being pushed forward by the US and its Western allies, and the latter is the refusal from Iran to defend the allegation. Regardless of the intention of either party's statement, after Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya war, the world is apparently approaching towards another imminent military confrontation.

If, for the sake of argument, we maintain the proposition of the US-led block that Iran is really approaching to build a nuclear weapon, even then it would be difficult for the US to answer why it refrains from taking any hard line on India, Pakistan or Israel's nuclear capacity. It is very hard to accept Israel being the lone nuclear power in the ME when the region has already experienced several wars that spilled over boundaries. The US-led allies' implied acceptance of Israel's nuclear superiority in the ME has overwhelmingly imbalanced the balance of power in the region, but nobody seems to acknowledge any danger of it.

Now what if Iran truly acquires the nuclear weapon, although it vehemently denies the allegation? If we take the US-led allies' arguments into consideration, then the possible scenario will be that if Iran has been able to acquire nuclear weapon that would open the floodgate of nuclear arms-race across the ME region as many countries in the region are interlocked with conflicts with each other. That may pose a big threat to global peace and security since the ME has been feeding the large chunk global energy demands for decades. However, some would argue that India and Pakistan's acquiring of

the nuclear weapons actually reduces the chance of any wider confrontation for trivial issues (take a note of Kargil war). Well, these are all possibilities. Things can even turn worst.

However, the interesting point is the kind of bizarre arguments from the global advocates, including IAEA, that they could not do anything when some countries

arbitrarily strive to dangerous nuclear technologies and even sought nuclear weapons because they were not the party to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Now, for a reasonable argument, if you cannot punish a country that is not even bother to sign the NPT, how come you can punish a country who honoured and obliged international commitments?

Another strange development that we have been witnessing is the fuss Israel is making about Iran and that it will bomb, attack, or destroy Iranian nuclear sites etc., and how the global advocates are forbearing such ado. Israel itself has violated UN resolutions for more than 35 instances and we could not see any sanction whatsoever has been imposed from the rest of the world



Nuclear facilities in Iran.

to punish the defiance. Ironically, the question is now being under consideration is not that whether Israel or the US has the legitimate right to strike preemptively on Iranian suspected nuclear sites but whether Israel is going to send the bomber jets or whether US's Fifth Fleet has to carry out the attack! You must say it is a strange world or a

world of might per se!

Iran is not going to be a cakewalk in any case. Perhaps, Iran, other than the superpowers, is the only country in the world that maintains some very strong proxies across the region that can inflict much harm. Therefore, if you are thinking of a war with Iran, you are actually opting for a regional war. Besides, the sophistication of high-tech war-game that played bigger role in the recent success stories of warfare is going to be less effective against the war with Iran. Iran itself developed some kind of home-grown medium to long-range missile technologies along with massive arms stockpiling from Russian and Chinese purchase that may prove strategically very significant.

Although, Israel and the US recently succeeded convincing Russia to scrap a deal and not to sell S-300 surface to air missile, one of the best technologies in air defense and which is a nightmare to even the most advanced air forces of the world, to Iran, there is a hush-hush that Iran somehow acquired the technology, may be from black market. If that is the case, the US or Israeli jets won't have a free fly in Iranian sky. Without the air superiority, winning Iran relying on marine or infantry is more than a dream. Besides, nobody actually has the right information what kind of missile technologies has been handed over to Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite-militia group, a deadly Iranian proxy who recently reiterated that it will launch an attack on Israel if Iran is being attacked.

Palestinian Hamas, another heavily armed Iranian proxy, has also issued the same threat. It would be interesting to see how the US or Israel would contain such deadly proxies that can take the war to Jerusalem and make the lives of Israelis close to hell. For mostly, apart from the US naval fleet or aircraft carriers being under the range of Iranian missiles, the Strait of Hormuz is the last, and perhaps the most effective card the Iranian will want to play. Iran will play the card when it will be in a desperate position and all other options are exhausted.

All that means is that the war with Iran will not simply be confined within certain territorial borders; rather it will engulf the entire region and might open other vulnerable war fronts that may engage disgruntled superpowers too. What one can expect from such a catastrophic development? Now for the US and its allies, attacking and winning Iran may give them an upper-hand in the Middle Eastern affairs but not winning it all the way may cost their already ebbing global stature and could end another hegemonic chapter of the world history. Are we sensing what is coming?

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Marine fisheries management

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IN contemporary ocean governance, management of marine fisheries, the most valuable among all oceanic living resources, has been given due priority in view of the fact that marine fisheries account for nearly 85% of the global fish catch. In addition, marine fisheries play an important role in the global provision of food, supply of least 15% of animal protein consumed by humans and indirectly supporting food production by aquaculture and livestock industries. However, the dilemma that the marine fisheries management has been facing so long is the issue of exploitation versus conservation. Needless to mention, principles and extensive regulatory arrangements for the management of marine fisheries on the ideals of preservation, conservation and sustainable exploitation have been clearly detailed out in Part V (EEZ) of the UNCLOS 1982. Alongside the normative principles of UNCLOS, various international initiatives (UN Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries FAO, Convention on Biological Diversity, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment etc.) have been taken to promote optimal utilisation of marine fishes, save the marine fish stocks from deleterious ecological and socio-economic consequences etc. Unfortunately, the extent to which the maritime nations are abiding by such restrictive principles of fisheries management remains unknown. While principles have been laid down, strong differences of opinions as to their meaning and implementation continue to persist.

As a result, global marine fishery is now in a state of crisis. An estimated 70% of the world's fish stocks are already being exploited at or beyond sustainable limits. Global marine fisheries land-up has decreased by about 1.7 million tonnes per year since late 1980s, with at least 28% of the world's fish stocks being overexploited or depleted and 52% fully exploited by 2008. The threat of unabated fishing continues with the tendency to increase more in the future. The reasons that explain this are rapidly increasing human population, escalating animal protein demand, destructive fishing methods, use of fish for medicinal purposes, labeling fish as 'health food,' use of fish for pet food industry and animal feed, wastage as 'by-catch' etc.

With respect to marine fishing, it is to be noted that most of the fishing in coastal states is concentrated in inshore waters near the coast, territorial waters and lastly in the EEZ. Among these, EEZ is the most resource base area in terms of possession of both living and non-living resources. While it is true that extended maritime zones as per the UNCLOS 1982 have benefited a number of coastal states, the fact remains that 80% of the world fish catch in the EEZ is still taken by not more than 20 fishing nations. These nations are the ones endowed with modern marine technology, equipments and tools. The rapacious fishing by a handful of privileged mari-

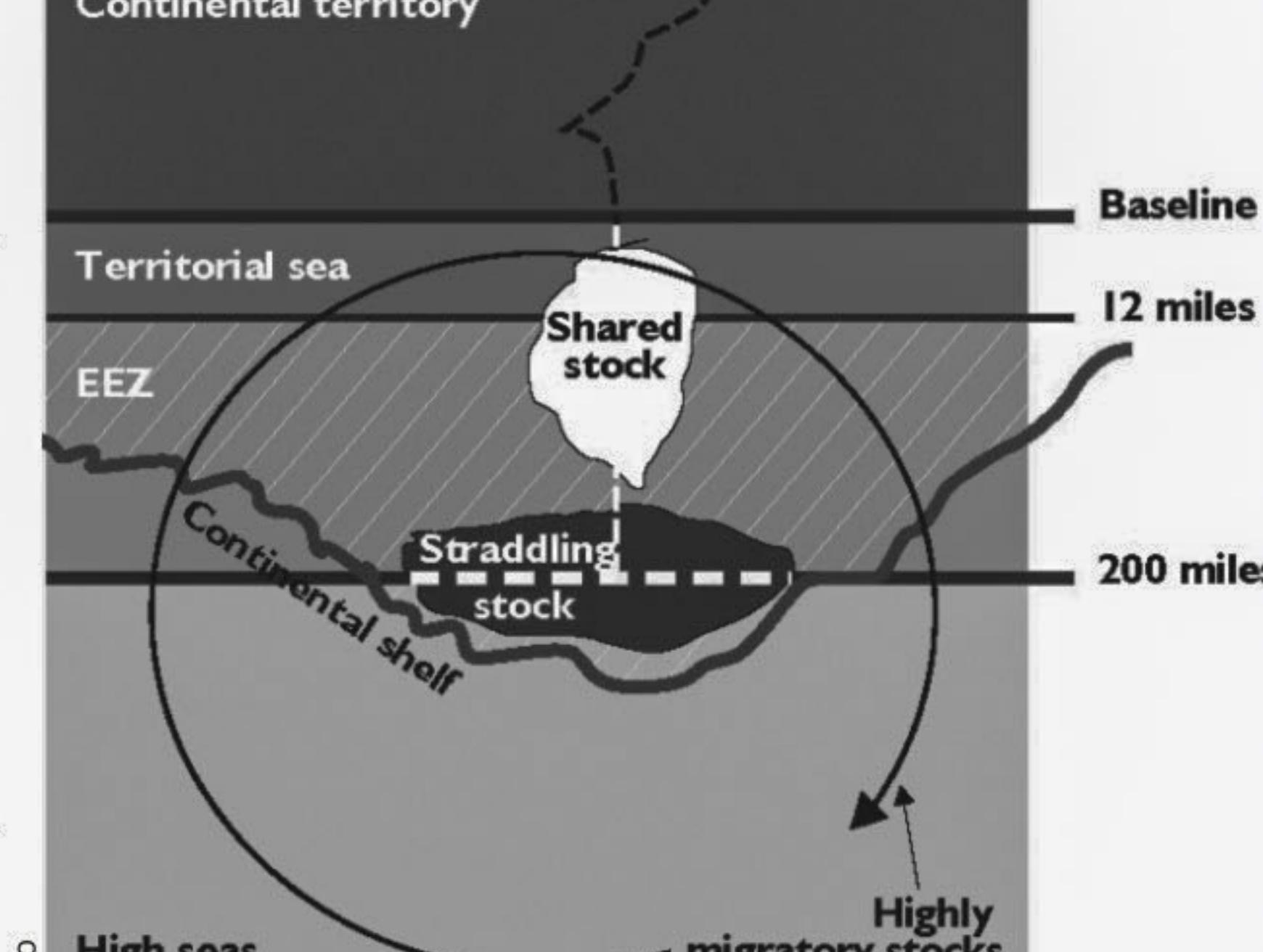
time nations failed to take into consideration the fact that even the largest EEZ is not a self-contained management unit. It is an area where the fishes originate in the zone and as well house those coming from the high seas. If resources and the environment are not managed beyond the 200 mile limit, they can not be managed effectively within the zone either. It is in this context that the negotiations on straddling and highly migratory fish (SHMF) ultimately led to the United Nations Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish stocks and Highly Migratory Stocks. The agreement is basically an expansion of Section 2 of Part VII (High Seas) of the Law of the Sea Convention, extending to the high seas the principles of conservation and management contained in part V (EEZ)

principle, established in the convention that should cooperate to ensure conservation and promote the objective of the optimum utilisation of fisheries resource both within and beyond the EEZ. The Agreement attempts to achieve this objective by providing a framework for cooperation in the conservation and management of those resources. It promotes good order in the oceans through the effective management and conservation of high seas resources by establishing, among other things, detailed minimum international standards for the conservation and management of SHMF; ensuring that measures taken for the conservation and management of these stocks in areas under national jurisdiction and in the adjacent high seas are compatible and coherent; ensuring that these are effective mechanisms for compliance and enforcement of those measures on the high seas; and recognizing the special requirements of developing

states in relation to conservation and management as well the development and participation in fisheries for the two types of stocks mentioned above.'

The essence of the Agreement on SHMF is the enmeshing of management of fishes living in two separate zones -- one within the national jurisdiction of a coastal state whereas the other is outside any such jurisdiction, the high seas. This was an effort built on three pillars: the introduction of responsible fishing, sustainable development with a view to introduce an environmental reference point, and the control of activities by means of regional or international arrangements. In the agreement, therefore, there is the fundamental recognition that: (i) it is impossible to manage fisheries within even the largest EEZ if they are not equally managed beyond the limits of EEZ; (ii) the two management systems must be properly integrated; (iii) regional cooperation and organisation (if needed international arrangements) are to play a crucial role in the management of the fisheries of the high seas and (iv) port states' responsibilities are extended from enforcement of environmental regulations to fisheries regulation.

It should be borne in mind that the Agreement on SHMF mainly targets those nations whose marine capacity allows them to fish in nearly all segments of oceans, let alone the areas like EEZ, the territorial sea etc. Bangladesh, as of now, has not been fully capable of exploiting its fish resources in the EEZ. Nonetheless, the country should be aware about the exploitation of fishes in its EEZ and the adjacent areas by countries like India, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The mentioned countries are well equipped to fish even in the high seas. As a result, Bangladesh's EEZ that overlaps with the EEZs of India and Sri Lanka respectively should be concerned about the SHMF that move in the interconnected waters. In this connection, the most practical step would be to go for some kind of a regional arrangement.



Simplified diagram of maritime zones and distribution of shared, straddling and highly migratory stocks as defined by UNCLOS - in articles 63(1), 63(2) and 64

and adding many of the useful details contained in Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 (Agenda 21 of UNCLOS 1982) is a comprehensive plan of action for the 21st century covering all sectors of socio-economic activity, contains a chapter specifically devoted to world's oceans and seas. The chapter identifies seven major programme areas, of which sustainable use and conservation of living resources of the high seas is one.). Before undertaking a further discussion on SHMF, it is pertinent to define these two species of fish.

Straddling fishes are those that migrate within the EEZ of two or more coastal states or in areas adjacent to the zone or beyond it. Highly migratory fish species are those that undertake migration in wide oceanic regions for the purpose of food, reproduction or averting any ecological disturbance. Highly migratory species are well listed in Annex I of UNCLOS where fishes like tuna, sword fish, pomfrets figure prominently.

The Agreement sets out principles for the conservation and management of SHMF stocks and establishes that such management must be based on the precautionary approach and the best available scientific information. The Agreement elaborates on the fundamental prin-

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Pakistan's 'Memogate': An orchestration?

SIFAT UDDIN

PAKISTAN has become a country of endless climaxes because it seems that the twists and turns will never end. Since the Abbottabad incident, political inconsistency in Pakistan has become a consistent phenomenon. Sometimes it seems that Pakistan is still haunted by the spectre of Osama bin Laden. However, it does not mean that before Abbottabad incident there had been a persistent peaceful political ambiance in Pakistan. The recent political crisis in Pakistan is evolving centering 'Memogate' scandal. 'Memogate' is a secret memorandum which was allegedly delivered to Admiral Michael Mullen, then the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, requesting the US intervention in the event of a military coup against Pakistan's elected government. The memo promised that Pakistan would allow the US input on a revamp of the country's national security set-up, and that it would eliminate Sections of the country's powerful Inter Services Intelligence agency, which allegedly is responsible for the ISI's links with the Taliban. After knowing this secret activity the army got infuriated that finally resulted in involving the Supreme Court which served a notice over inaction in graft case of President Asif Ali Zardari.

But the present situation is unprecedented because of several reasons. The most important reason is the existing strained relationship with the US. The US killed Osama Bin Laden violating Pakistan's sovereignty. Last November the US led Nato strike killed twenty four Pakistani troops in Northern Pakistan which finally resulted in a halt on Nato supply line to Afghanistan via Pakistan and forced the US to pull back from Shamshai airbase in Kharan, Pakistan. In January, President Obama signed a bill to give bar on aiding Pakistan as a measure of tit for tat. Another important reason is a better strong position of various democratic institutions like media, Supreme Court and stronger opposition parties in today's Pakistan.

The 'memogate' scandal may bring a shuffle in Pakistan government. But here I shall not view the scandal to understand the national politics of Pakistan rather will dissect the issue to understand its implication with external dimensions. It may create a very tricky option for the US to exploit divisions in Pakistan politics and force Pakistan to come into terms.

It is a historically proven truth that the civil-military relation in Pakistan is always at a daggers drawn. But in most of the cases the relationship was influenced or shaped by the external factors. However, the official relationship between Pakistan and the US set back after the Nato strikes. Since then, both the government and military are maintaining a clandestine relationship, because both the two organisations' existence depends upon Washington's positive nod. An obedient Pakistan is also important for the US. To bring stability in Afghanistan and maintaining counterterrorism effort in South Asia and uprooting insurgency from this region, a stable Pakistan is a precondition. The US cannot afford to let Pakistan run alone. In an updated research, conducted by The Nuclear Threat Initiative, in a project led by former US Senator Sam Nunn and the Economist Intelligence Unit, it is found that Pakistan's nuclear weapons are at most risk just after North Korea.

'Memogate' scandal will finally bring one party, either the government or the armed force, closer to the US. And then the US will utilise this weak point to enforce Pakistan to cow tow to its demand. From this point of view no one can deny the possibilities of orchestration from the US to exploit 'Memogate' to its own benefit.

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