

## No Peace Prospects

The path to peace seems blocked. Nor is the door for dialogue open. At the time of writing Washington was seriously considering committing ground troops to the Libyan conflict as NATO air-strikes did not achieve the desired results despite massive devastation of Libya and failed to force Gaddafi to kowtow unconditionally to Uncle Sam. In truth Britain looked more enthusiastic than America in destroying Libya as quickly as possible as British Prime Minister David Cameron would like to see the 'ill-trained ragtag rebels' getting armed support system liberally, in defiance of international outcry against invasion, to finish the job. But the White House policy-makers are taking time, hopefully to isolate Gaddafi from the international community further. Meanwhile, Obama stopped short of formally recognising Transitional National Council (TNC), the political platform of the Libyan Opposition that now gets de facto government in exile treatment by Italy and France. But formal recognition of TNC by US means whatever remains of Libya as an independent entity will cease to exist.

Not that Gaddafi was a democratic angel but that cannot be an excuse to pulverise Libya and kill civilians in the name of protecting human rights and establishing 'democratic order' which in essence means strengthening imperial control in the region. Saddam was not anti-American and yet he had to go to make room for men of America's choice. Now everybody knows how Saddam's back-channel manoeuvring with the US fizzled out because corporate America needed war and lucrative business deals in post-war reconstruction in Iraq. Even if Libya remains partially destroyed, it will open huge business opportunities for the recession-hit Wall Street.

True, at one stage Gaddafi successfully utilised Soviet-US rivalry to Libya's advantage and the problem the White House had with him was his close ties to the Soviet bloc. The problem they had was his assertiveness in supporting certain radical movements aligned with the Soviet power at a time when a global military showdown looked imminent. But for quite some time Gaddafi has been making overtures to America and its western allies, particularly since the fall of the mighty Soviet Union. For obvious reasons the merchants of death in the West were anxious and envious of the Soviets as Moscow became a major weapons supplier to Libya. Over 95 percent of Libya's export earnings were coming from oil and Gaddafi's government was one of the three largest weapons importers in the 1973-83 decade in the third world. His support to the Palestinian cause and African liberation movement is well known but strictly speaking his anti-imperialist stance is increasingly losing its relevance in the Arab world in the recent years. If anything his ideological formulations as propounded in the 'Green Book' are a curious admixture of populism and utopia that cannot be translated into action. After all wage earners cannot be partners of an enterprise even if they are officially entitled to shares in a system that doesn't empower people as owners of means of production. Despite huge oil revenues Libya's unemployment problem among the highly aspiring youth is not a matter of little concern for any regime, democratic or autocratic. Right now, it is 20 percent in Libya, much to the dismay of a vast majority of people. In all fairness unlike Egypt, Libya was not a basket case and in early February 2011, the IMF certified a robust Libyan economy and Gaddafi's positive move to integrate Libya with the global economic order dictated by the transnational corporations.

No doubt Ronald Reagan launched attack on Libya with a 'proclaimed' objective of physically liquidating Gaddafi. But that was in 1980s and the Soviet Union was still there while Gaddafi still had some manoeuvring capability. But much has changed since then. For all practical purposes 9/11 radically changed the Middle East scenario as Gaddafi too had no option but to join America's bandwagon of anti-terror squad and allow American and western oil cartels to do business favourably in Libya. Also, in a desperate bid to woo western

powers he signed an agreement with Italy to seal off the crossing routes of undocumented African immigrants coming through Libya to Europe. In other words he behaved like a white racist as he would ask Europe to adopt stricter measures to turn back black Africans. What transpired between his son and Hillary Clinton when they met without specifying any agenda is not known. But it was definitely aimed at buying American favour for his autocratic rule and of course in exchange of business concessions. How all this went wrong is a matter of conjecture. America is always in search of a 'more workable' regime and popular discontent is its new weapon to intervene in any country. If there is no popular upsurge, they could create one to further its imperial aggression.

During the American invasion of Iraq, progressives around the world took to the streets and came down heavily on Bush's barbarism. This time Obama is facing no such mass outbursts anywhere in the world though Libya is bleeding and ironically, NATO's indiscriminate bombing even killed rebels for whose aid their military mission was scripted in the first place.

Nearer home official left doesn't bother about what is happening in the Libyan desert or for that matter in the Middle East, though it is a safe bet to increase their anti-imperialist stance whatever it means in the real world of politics. They are more concerned about elections. As for the far left the less said the better because organisationally and ideologically as well, they are too weak to do anything other than pasting a few posters condemning American attacks on Libya. □□□