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Qaddafi's departure is not easy

After the fall of Tunisia and Egypt, it seemed that the Libyan strongman Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, faced with huge public anger, will soon be forced to step down. Iran and many European countries were named as potential refuge for Qaddafi. Reports were abound that Qaddafi has put a proposal before the rebels that he was ready to leave the country, provided no harm is done to him or his family and all his property and gold will remain with him. But the reliability of all such reports becomes questionable when either Qaddafi or his son is seen on TV saying that- I am Libya, I will fight, and I will die here. Qaddafi claims that only he can bind together the nation, which consists of numerous tribes. And if he lost the grip over the country, it'll break down. He quotes Bosnia in this regard.

No doubt there is huge public outcry in Libya against Qaddafi. Reasons are same as in Tunisia and Egypt- poverty, unemployment, corruption, inflation and despotism. Although, being a major oil exporter, Libya is economically better placed than its neighbouring counterparts. Another major difference between Egypt and Libya is that while Hosni Mubarak of Egypt had the support of the US, Qaddafi is not that 'lucky'. He bluntly criticizes the American policies. The US cannot tolerate such a ruler of an oil rich nation for long. Therefore, it is supporting of the rebellion against Qaddafi.

American President Obama is very much concerned that Qaddafi is using his army, air force and mercenaries to crush the rebels. While the US is trying to establish a no-fly zone over Libya, at the same time it wants NATO to militarily interfere. Obama himself said recently that Brussels is weighing the options of which military action is also one. This is in response to the violence in Libya. We are with the people of Libya. Even though the option of no-fly zone was broached by the US, now the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has left this matter to the UN

Security Council. As per the reports, along with the army, Qaddafi is using air raids to trash the protesters. More than a thousand people are feared dead in clashes between the rebels and the pro-Qaddafi forces. If Libya is declared a no-fly zone, no plane would be permitted to fly over it, not even that of the Libyan Air Force. And if any plane is found violating the no-fly zone, international forces shall have the right to act against it, fire it and blow it. The UNSC is entitled to decide over any kind of interference in Libya.

The question pertains to the transparency of American policy vis-à-vis Libya. If it sympathises with the rebels and want to see a democracy installed in Libya, there are many monarchies and dictatorships which enjoy warm relationship with the US. Many such countries are the US allies which face more poverty, corruption and despotism than Libya. Then why the stubbornness to dethrone Qaddafi? Is it just because Qaddafi refuses to act as a puppet of Washington? Or the US is really sympathetic to the people of Libya. Qaddafi's claim that the West is envy of the Libyan oil and by way of this rebellion, these countries want to enter the country, cannot be refuted in entirety as the world is witness to the American policy in the Middle-East since 1990 to 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Reports suggest the strengthening of the rebels and pro-Qaddafi forces alternately. All people of Libya are not against Qaddafi per se. At many places, common people can be seen supporting the forces. The army has taken back the hold of many areas earlier 'liberated' by the opposition. Cities like Zawiya and Ras Lanuf, which were under the control of the rebels, are now back with the pro-Qaddafi camp. It is now clear that dethroning Qaddafi is not that easy. But many countries like France seem more impulsive than the opposition to remove Qaddafi. This is the reason France has become the first country to formally recognize the opposition Libyan National Council. Though the European Union doesn't support this haste of Sarkozy, it is in favour of working in tandem with the Arab League to resolve the crisis.

Notwithstanding the above situation, Libya is facing the threat of an impending civil war. More than three hundred thousand people have become homeless. The UN has appealed to collect 1.6 million dollars for the rehabilitation of displaced. Despite this, Col. Qaddafi's hold on power doesn't seem to loosen anytime soon. Even though Obama favours action by the NATO, his Director of National Intelligence, General James Clapper believes that the victory of the rebels is unlikely. He says that Qaddafi would 'win' since his soldiers are professional, well trained and well equipped. At the same time, the rebels are also wary of a possible influx of the American forces in the guise of unseating Qaddafi. Many countries including Russia, China and Iran have warned against any such uncalled interference. Overall, these are the factors which are still providing strength to Qaddafi to remain cling to power.