



**Lasantha Pethiyagoda**

The British Anglo-Persian oil company (later named BP) discovered oil in the early part of the twentieth century in Iran. Since then, no part of the world has always been under more threat from Western military action than in the pursuit of oil. The recurring use of military muscle to gain control over valuable supplies has now gained new heights. With diminishing reserves, and oil being so vital to the climate-changing excesses of the Western way of life, the use of force is justified under different pretexts. With emerging economic giants like China and India not willing to eat humble pie anymore, the battles for energy can only become worse in the years ahead.

The culture and lifestyle we associate with cheap petrol, like large petrol guzzling cars and long cross-country driving vacations continue to be valued at the expense of innocent lives in the Middle East. At five percent of the global population, the US consumes the lion's share of oil, and it resents competition from China, for example.

The impending threat to Libya is not characterised by any single, clearly defined event, but a series of seemingly unrelated political and economic decisions overwhelmingly derived from military means. Recently we have witnessed not so subtle moves against Iran for example. It is inconceivable that Western leaders would shy away from a massive onslaught on Saudi Arabia if, for example, the ruling monarchy were to be overthrown by the will of the people, as happened in Tunisia and Egypt.

With high oil prices likely to persist indefinitely due to fast depletion of reserves and increase in demand, one crucial solution to minimise the pain is for the West to adopt alternative technologies, rather than appropriate available resources by force. This is because all economies run on energy. Transportation, and therefore food costs, agricultural produce together with petroleum products like paints, pharmaceuticals, lubricants, plastics and cosmetics will become exorbitantly expensive. Western economies will be hard hit due to lifestyle considerations. However, direct and massive losses will occur in the "third" world as mature economies offset losses.

There is a growing challenge to the long developed industrialised nations from the emerging new dynamic nations of Asia, notwithstanding the catastrophes gripping Japan. The mature and efficient economies must reduce consumption of fossil oil and gas as they already have the means of generating alternate energy.

Iran has large reserves of natural gas, in addition to oil. Together with other big suppliers, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Venezuela, Russia and Nigeria, Before Libya's nearly two million barrels of daily oil production was up for grabs, Iran offered the US a pretext for invasion, or more likely, a nuclear attack on its underground nuclear facilities which are out of reach of conventional munitions dropped on Afghanistan and Iraq, exterminating millions of civilians. The pretext was the commencement of nuclear activity while being a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, unlike India or Pakistan.

Because natural gas extraction and processing technology was developed later than those for oil, its principal sources of supply are relatively abundant. Iran's new fields await development. Eventually, these supplies will peak, but not for many years after oil supplies have dwindled. This is why the US, while looking for non-existent WMD and an "exit-strategy" from the Iraqi quagmire, positioned itself in a predatory stance against Iran.



# LIBYA AT THE CENTRE OF THE GLOBAL OIL CRISIS

It is striking in fact, that the thirst for oil has elevated energy contracts into the realm of national security, on an equal footing with "terrorism" and nuclear proliferation. In contrast to its belligerence and bullying tactics against non-nuclear Iran and earlier Iraq, the US simply "appeals" to Russia, China and India not to become partners with "rogue" states like Iran and Venezuela. In fact, the US definition of "rogue" can be applied to any democratically elected government (ie Venezuela, Iran) if they defy the wishes of American hegemony.

Anyone familiar with the US re-definitions of ordinary English will understand the chilling prospect of pre-emptive terror unleashed on

any "rogue" state that in future does not accede its oil resources for US consumption, possibly at prices determined by the US, when "all bets are off" in the existing pricing mechanism.

The US (acting under "NATO") will not hesitate in a future escalation, to cite human rights violations or other trumped up cause to invade Libya decisively with only nuclear weapons resulting in horrific devastation, as it is already mired with personnel on the ground in other 'theatres'.

As in the case of Iraq, the US will again deny the role of oil in its incursions into uncooperative countries liker Libya. What it

terms as "energy security" will evolve from mere economic and political contexts into that of military policy.

US imperialism, militarism and an ever-expanding "defence" force girdling the global oil belt have created a new dimension of the meaning of invincible power. The US/UK governments mobilize the masses using tragedies such as 9-11 in order to exploit them as cannon fodder, fed on a litany of lies concocted at the whim of an extremist group of ideologists with intense influence within the administration, in order to maintain public consent for ever-increasing expansion of control.

There is a tradition of secrecy about military spending, combined with engendering a culture of faith and misguided patriotism in Anglo-American history. The capacity for things to get worse for the rest of the world is limitless, unless people become aware and act to reverse this process. The anti-despotic uprisings in the Middle East have been good examples of this awakening.

I write about these issues because I find a chasm of difference between what we in Australia are told and what I could see to be inescapable. It is a burden, which we must share, not with a view to vanquish existential dread, but in finding a way to live with these realities. Learning how to question and doubt is difficult, as we are often forced to accept the benefits of life in an affluent society in exchange for maintaining silence on our troubled conscience.

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