

Libyan War: Humanitarian Disaster, West Getting Bugged Down In Africa

By [Global Research](#)

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Libya's expanding complications

-The longer the Western allies are embroiled in the domestic conflict in Libya, the stronger Africa's anti-interventionist sentiments will become, with the result that the political legitimacy of the Libyan opposition will become even more tenuous, compelling the West to undertake more substantial operations in Libya and ultimately bogging them down in Africa. -[Arab countries] first tried to instigate Western countries to intervene in the Libyan conflict and attempted to let Gadhafi serve as a sacrificial lamb for the upheavals in the Middle East, especially those with their own domestic revolt pressure.

BEIJING: With no end in sight the situation is turning into a humanitarian disaster with far-reaching consequences.

After weeks of seesawing firefights, the Libyan conflict seems to have fallen into a stalemate. The Western allies have assumed that they could intervene and oust Libyan ruler Muammar Gadhafi through air strikes.

But even with the aid of the allied bombardment the rebel forces have been unable to gain an apparent advantage over the government troops.

Indeed, with increasing civilian casualties and a growing humanitarian disaster, the West's military operations have merely convinced some of the rebels that the opposition is betraying national interests and resorting to Western powers to further its own interests.

The political impotence of the opposition is gradually being exposed. Besides accusing the Gadhafi regime of corruption and dictatorship, the opposition has found no other convincing arguments with which to attack its legitimacy.

The opposition is composed of a lot of factions scrambling for power, which has undermined the rebels' unity, and there is concern among the Western allies that in a post-Gadhafi era the opposition would be incapable of restoring order.

For the allies, a long-drawn-out military intervention will inevitably result in a growing number of civilian casualties and serious humanitarian issues, such as the destruction of civilian facilities, swelling numbers of refugees and a shortage of food and medical care. This would enable the Gadhafi regime to make a big fanfare over the misery of the Libyan people and to claim that the people's suffering was caused by the West and the only way out is to return to the previous state of affairs.

Long-term military intervention by the allies would also consolidate anti-war sentiments in their own countries and because of the financial crisis and the already strained fiscal circumstances in Western countries the allies cannot indefinitely finance their military operations on the battlefield.

After weathering the allies' air strikes and the opposition's attacks, Gadhafi quickly began a diplomatic offensive. He has spared no effort to enlist the support of neighboring African Union (AU) countries and has used the fact that Libya, as an African country, is suffering from foreign intervention to arouse simmering anti-colonialist sentiments. The Libyan leader wants the whole AU to back his legitimacy.

In Africa, Gadhafi's government is increasingly regarded as the standard bearer in the fight against Western colonial intervention. Libya is becoming the front line of African countries' resistance toward Western interference, rather than a place where the UN mandated a peacekeeping no-fly zone, intended to prevent Libyan civilians from being abused by the Gadhafi regime.

The longer the Western allies are embroiled in the domestic conflict in Libya, the stronger Africa's anti-interventionist sentiments will become, with the result that the political legitimacy of the Libyan opposition will become even more tenuous, compelling the West to undertake more substantial operations in Libya and ultimately bogging them down in Africa.

Compared with Africa's increasing unity, the fragmentation of the Arab world might be detrimental to hopes of achieving a resolution to the situation in Libya. In dealing with Libya, the Arab countries seem to be in confusion.

They first tried to instigate Western countries to intervene in the Libyan conflict and attempted to let Gadhafi serve as a sacrificial lamb for the upheavals in the Middle East, especially those with their own domestic revolt pressure.

When Gadhafi managed to stand up against the allies' military strikes, the Arab League began to hold itself slightly aloof from the West so as to avoid being labeled as "the betrayer of Arab interests" by their people. Those few countries, which are firmly following the West's footsteps, will likely incur the anger of the Arab world in the future.

To a large extent, the Libya crisis has caused the Arab world to divide into three parts, those countries that have turned to Africa, those to Iran and those to the West. This has further reduced the Arab world's influence in regional affairs.

The West's deepening involvement, combined with the complex relations between countries in the region and tribal and religious conflicts and grievances, will further complicate the situation and make it even harder to find peace in the region.

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