

NATO is a Loser in Terms of Morality and Justice

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NATO may have helped the rebels seize power but it is a loser in terms of morality and justice. The United Nations Security Council authorized NATO to impose a no-fly zone in Libya to prevent loss of civilian lives. But NATO has defeated this purpose by prolonging and expanding the civil conflict that has cost thousands of civilians their lives and rendered tens of thousands homeless.

The first decade of the 21st century has seen the US led Western forces into two wars to topple regimes, Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Western forces, no doubt, have overthrown regimes. But are they true victors? The war in Iraq was the turning point for US hegemony, and the decade-long war in Afghanistan has put the US and its allies in a dilemma.

On July 31, British Secretary of State for Defence Liam Fox said Libyan rebel forces “have very limited ground potential”, while French Defense Minister Gerard Longuet told reporters that they were prepared for a “protracted conflict”. But only three weeks later, the rebel forces entered Tripoli. There is little doubt they did so with immense support from Western powers.

According to The New York Times, European countries such as the United Kingdom and France sent their special forces to train the rebels in Libya. It was a move which, CNN quoting a NATO official said, helped the rebels gain massive strength in such a short time. In fact, on Aug 23, Longuet admitted to having sent weapons and “technical staff” to Libya.

Apart from helping the Libyan rebels in every way possible, Western countries also bribed some of Muammar Gadhafi’s officials, which is exactly what the United States had done with Iraqi officials before invading that country in 2003.

The People’s Daily has reported that most of Gadhafi’s senior military officers, including a brigadier in charge of Gadhafi’s personal security, had been bribed. No wonder, the brigadier ordered surrender of his troops at a critical time to allow the rebel forces to enter Tripoli without much resistance.

It is clear, too, that NATO helped the rebels throughout their push toward Tripoli. But that does not necessarily mean NATO has been successful in the civil war.

NATO may have helped the rebels seize power but it is a loser in terms of morality and justice. The United Nations Security Council authorized NATO to impose a no-fly zone in Libya to prevent loss of civilian lives. But NATO has defeated this purpose by prolonging and expanding the civil conflict that has cost thousands of civilians their lives and rendered tens of thousands homeless. The US-based National Catholic Register’s comment on the Libyan

civil war, made earlier, seems apt: "Broadening our military mission to include regime change would be a mistake." But that is exactly what has happened.

Instead of demonstrating NATO's strength, the capture of Tripoli has exposed its deficiencies and weaknesses. Under the heavy fire of NATO jets, Gadhafi's troops armed with not-so-modern weapons stood their ground for five months, forcing Western powers to intervene directly. As some Western newspapers said earlier, whether or not Gadhafi loses power, the Western alliance is already a loser for wasting huge amounts of taxpayers' money.

The situation in Libya can be described, to quote a phrase generally used inside NATO, as a "catastrophic success". The mess in Libya has all the symptoms of becoming a lasting headache for leaders in Brussels and Washington.

The rebel forces comprise several people with different, even contradicting, interests including tribes from Libya's eastern region, former officials who betrayed Gadhafi, pro-Western democrats, Islamic extremists and Al-Qaida terrorists. It is hard to imagine that they will remain united in post-Gadhafi Libya.

Besides, the civil war has intensified tribal rivalry, for long a feature of Libyan body politic. The tribes that supported Gadhafi are not likely to take things lying down as the new game for power is played out. Many observers fear that Libya could go the way of Somalia or Iraq. That definitely cannot be good news for the Western powers. Experience tells us how easy it is for a country with Muslim majority population to fall prey to Islamic extremists, and there is every possibility of post-Gadhafi Libya becoming one.

So does Libya teach us something?

Western observers love to say that NATO's "success" in Libya will encourage protesters in other Middle East and North African countries such as Syria. But they refuse to see or hear what Syrian protesters want. It is true that Syrian protesters shouted "Bye Gaddafi, Bashar next" after Libyan rebels captured Tripoli, but it is also true that they don't want foreign forces to intervene in their country. They realize that political problems should be solved through political means rather than violence or foreign intervention. After all, they know that all foreign intervening forces serve their own purpose not the victims'. This is as true today as it was in the past.

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Political problems can no longer be solved with force. The US should learn from its past experiences and stop regaling in its mythical glory, for it will benefit none and harm all.

China has long been advocating the use of negotiations to solve political problems, and has always opposed foreign intervention in any country. China respects the choice of the Libyan people and is willing to play a role in the reconstruction of their country, for irrespective of what happens in Libya, China will always remain a friend of the Libyan people.

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