

Libya And Ivory Coast: NATO Reverts To Law Of The Jungle In Africa

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Cote d'Ivoire and Libya have unfortunately already swallowed this bitter pill of it. This is brutal offense to the norms of international relations showing no respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. What's more, the African countries' tradition of independence in their own affairs was also breached.

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This is the year of elections for the African continent, with almost 20 countries preparing to vote. The dispute in Cote d'Ivoire earlier this year did put a question mark next to the prospect of Africa's political future but the smooth electoral process in Nigeria, the continent's most populous nation, had brushed it aside.

Unrest in Africa during the post-Cold War era has often been related to elections, as illustrated in the riots in Kenya, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar and the Cote d'Ivoire between 2008 and 2011.

They were caused by burning rivalries or the lack of transparency in the election process, but actually it was the "winner takes all" policy, the combination of tribal culture and modern democracy that led to them.

We need to make it clear that the recent unrest in Northern Africa's Tunisia and Egypt don't belong to this category. Those sudden, spontaneous, severe and contagious riots there were the result of deep-rooted problems, and rigged elections were just part of the reason.

Though the trigger points in different countries are various, poor living conditions and anger toward dictatorship were the two main reasons. Now, the storm of revolution is spreading wildly to the Middle Eastern nations of Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. So the next natural question is, will the storm continue to sweep southward and affect the rest of the continent?

Though they share the same continent, Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa are hugely different in everything from religion to economics. Compared to north Africa, the state of higher education and the Internet coverage in sub-Saharan Africa remains relatively poor.

Meanwhile, most southern African countries have been on the road to democratization since the Cold War ended. Although the political reforms in north Africa and the Middle East have influenced sub-Saharan Africa, the impact has been minimal.

But it still seems too early for us to draw the conclusion that sub-Saharan Africa is immune to the chaos, especially when the West has once again chosen to intervene in others' internal affairs through military actions.

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NATO bombers have reminded us once again that for the power-politics era, the law of the jungle still applies. Lots of questions have been placed on the table as the humanitarian crisis is mounting amid the Libyan stalemate. Why were African countries' proposals for political and peaceful solutions eventually ignored by the Western powerhouses?

It's quite obvious if we look back at history, that military actions could never be the key to easing tension but eventually worsen it, as the Afghanistan and Iraq wars have shown.

It's time to keep an watchful eye on the West's intervention. Africa's year of elections is in a tricky phrase, given the turbulent conditions of its northern neighbors.

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