



Groundhog Day Syndrome: Why Washington Just Can't Stop Intervening

April 19, 2016

The American political elite is out of touch with reality: over and over again it has found itself bogged down in overseas conflicts, unable to break the vicious circle, US scholar A. Trevor Thrall notes, expressing concerns over Washington's eagerness to jump back into Libya.

It seems that the US foreign policy establishment is suffering from the "Groundhog Day Syndrome": they keep doing the same things over and over again ignoring the fact that their strategy simply does not work.

This behavior prompts serious concerns, especially now that Washington is preparing to launch yet another military adventure in Libya.

"The eagerness to jump back into Libya follows a five-stage pattern that has become all too familiar since the end of the Cold War. This pattern reflects the fundamental inability of the American political system to accept the world as it actually is, rather than how policymakers prefer it to be. Without addressing this dysfunction, the United States will find itself unable to break its cycle of failure in the Middle East," Professor A. Trevor Thrall, an Adjunct Scholar at the Cato Institute, writes in his recent article for The National Interest.

The American scholar specifies what "a five-stage pattern" is. According to Thrall, the first stage is "outrage and denial." Washington habitually uses the Americans' outrage "erupting when events abroad violated the moral sensibilities of American foreign-policy elites and the public," the scholar remarks.

Thrall dubs the second stage as "stunted debate and the precipitous use of force." Stage three is "premature declaration of victory." The fourth stage is called "attention deficit disorder and memory loss." And the fifth one is "repeat... endlessly."

Caught in a vicious circle the US foreign policy establishment manipulates the Americans into approving the Pentagon's new military operations overseas through large-scale media campaigns, then declares "the mission" accomplished, drops the issue, and... resumes military activity.

Thrall notes that the Obama administration called the US-NATO invasion of Libya a "model intervention" and "an example of 'smart power' in action." sweeping the damage and the disaster caused by NATO under the rug.

Commenting on the US invasion of Libya in his 2013 essay for Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs American academic Alan Kuperman wrote:

"The [US] intervention extended the war's duration about sixfold; increased its death toll approximately seven to ten times; and exacerbated human rights abuses, humanitarian suffering, Islamic radicalism, and weapons proliferation in Libya and its neighbors."

Libya has turned into a hornet's nest. The power vacuum has been filled by various factions of Islamic extremists and infamous Daesh terrorists. And no one can guarantee that a new US-NATO military campaign in North Africa would mend the problem.

To add insult to injury, the Libyan turmoil poses a serious threat to the European Union's security.

"The news reports of the last couple of months have clearly shown what was predicted long ago — that Libya is rapidly becoming the key stronghold of the so-called 'Islamic State' [Daesh]. It is a stronghold that is in the immediate vicinity of Europe's southern coastlines," freelance journalist and geopolitical analyst Martin Berger writes in his article for New Eastern Outlook.

Daesh has taken over the Libyan city of Sirte and is now transforming it into a citadel similar to Iraqi Mosul or Syrian Raqqa. Terrorist cells are spreading like cancer all over Libya.

According to Berger, to solve the Daesh problem and mitigate the terror threat to Europe Washington should team up with Russia as soon as possible.

However, the question then arises how to settle wider crisis that engulfed North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

Thrall believes that Washington should reconsider its intervention policy in the first place.