**Hammer versus Nail head USA policy**

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It is said that if the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem appears to be a nail head. A close examination of American use of military muscles abroad since Second World War effectively proves that dictum. According to a Congressional Research Service estimate, the United States has employed military force over 200 times since the end of the Cold [War](https://dailytimes.com.pk/526555/jfk-letter-promising-santa-safe-during-cold-war-on-display/). Many of these operations have taken place in or around the Middle East, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. But other, less frequently recalled interventions have occurred elsewhere, as in Bosnia, Colombia, Haiti, Kosovo, Liberia, and the Philippines. What’s more, the tendency to intervene is not simply the product of the United States’ emergence as an unbridled superpower after the Cold War. Between 1948 and 1991, during a time of supposedly stabilizing bipolar competition, the United States sent its military to fight abroad more than 50 times. American military action is not, as many believe, a feature of post-Cold War overstretch; it has been a central element of the United States’ approach to the world for decades.

There are a lot of for and against arguments to American interventions abroad; nevertheless without clear cut official or academic stance that becomes acceptable and implementable as a state policy in pursuance of stated or more importantly unstated objectives, which mostly remain obscured from the public or even political eyes. That is why President Trump had to “listen to the general of the generals” against his own announced pullout from Afghanistan and Syria. The squabble against intrusion generally takes five outlines with some elements of truth to each, but with inherent risk of obscuring other, more knotty realities.The first argument holds that the United States need not employ military means in response to terrorism, civil wars, mass atrocities, and other problems that are not its business. Almost two decades old quagmire in Afghanistan that has superseded the horrors of Vietnam has already stretched well beyond eradicating the original al Qaeda perpetrators and their Afghan base. The civil wars in Libya, Syria, and Yemen may be tragic, but they do not demand a U.S. military response any more than did the atrocities in Rwanda, eastern Congo, or Darfur.

Although the precise financial cost depends on how one counts, what is certain is that more than 4,500 U.S. military personnel have been killed in Iraq and nearly 2,500 in Afghanistan, plus tens of thousands injured in both wars-to say nothing of the casualties among allied forces, military contractors, and local civilians

The second disagreement with intervention takes in to account its supposedly poor past performance. Despite United States’ good intentions and debatable declared purposes i.e. eradicating terrorism, finishing genocide, stabilizing countries and spreading democracy; Washington has not been very successful in its attempts. Iraq and Libya look worse today than when the wars against Saddam Hussein and Muammar al-Qaddafi began, and the Taliban currently control more of Afghanistan than at any time since 2001. Long gone are U.S. aspirations to turn these countries into democracies that would radiate liberalism beyond their borders. However, As counter arguments, it is stated that Iraq would not have left Kuwait in 1991 had the United States not led the effort; mass carnage in the Balkans during the 1990s would not have ended without a central U.S. role, even though it took place on European soil. In Afghanistan and Syria, U.S. allies have made it clear that they will stay as long as the United States does but will head for the exit otherwise. U.S. friends in Europe have proved decidedly uninterested in taking matters into their own hands, and when Washington has declined to evocatively intervene itself, they have often remained inactive.

The third argument against intervention points to the slippery slope involved in such efforts: start a military campaign, and the United States will never get out e.g. Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The fourth argument can be boiled down to the plea, “Why us?” Why must the United States always run to the sound of the guns, especially when other countries are capable of taking on such burdens and may have more skin in the game? Europe is geographically closer to Libya and Syria, at far greater risk from terrorism and refugee flows, and possesses capable military forces of its own. Middle Eastern allies have their own resources, too. The American role might not be so indispensable after all. The ultimaterationale most commonly offered for getting out of the intrusion business relates to its costs, both direct ones-the lives lost and damaged, the dollars borrowed and spent-and opportunity costs. As the casualties and financial costs of the United States’ Middle Eastern wars have mounted, Americans’ appetite for new interventions and their commitment to existing ones has understandably diminished.The costs of these wars have been extraordinary: at a rally in Ohio in April 2018, Trump estimated them at $7 trillion over 17 years and concluded that the country has nothing to show for the effort “except death and destruction.” Although the precise financial cost depends on how one counts, what is certain is that more than 4,500 U.S. military personnel have been killed in Iraq and nearly 2,500 in Afghanistan, plus tens of thousands injured in both wars-to say nothing of the casualties among allied forces, military contractors, and local civilians. Critics of these resource-intensive operations blame them for bogging down the United States in a region of second-tier importance and distracting Washington from the greater threats of China and Russia, as well as from pressing domestic issues. And above all, American reliance on NATO allies is less certain than before for the same human and economic cost; besides other more complicated foreign and economic policy objectives of each ally, as has been witnessed in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan and currently against Iran.

As 2020 US presidential campaign picks up pace, leading candidates from both Democratic and Republican parties are likely to make once again non-intervention rhetoric as principal slogan to play on the public sentiments though; yet, the implementation of such catchphrases will continue to reside in the hands of deep state being custodians of the long term strategic objectives of USA to keep intact its stature as a singular unchallenged super power. Therefore, it may just be more practical for the USA policy makers that instead of settling into wishful thinking, they should accept that the use of military force will remain an essential tool of U.S. strategy, may be as a last resort with stricter congressional oversight and approval. That, in turn, requires applying the right lessons from recent decades with respect to the outcome of all interventions, cost versus benefits and above all the limits of kinetic military operations as continuation of state policy.

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