



## Republicans Target Biden: GOP Politicians Have the Most Blood on Their Hands

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Doug Bandow

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Republican politicians busy endorsing Donald Trump's behavior at its most irresponsible and whitewashing his followers' violent attempt to halt the peaceful transfer of power on January 6 have now turned their fine moral sensibilities on President Joe Biden over his botched withdrawal from Afghanistan. It isn't too late to hold the GOP accountable for having made the Afghan debacle inevitable, as well as created the even worse Iraq catastrophe.

Biden made the right decision about leaving Afghanistan. The extraordinary Afghan collapse only reinforced the correctness of his decision. As he explained: "One more year, or five more years, of U.S. military presence would not have made a difference if the Afghan military cannot or will not hold its own country. And an endless American presence in the middle of another country's civil conflict was not acceptable to me."

The U.S. achieved its legitimate and serious objectives almost at the beginning—wrecking al-Qaeda and punishing the Taliban. Washington then should have gone home. Attempting to create a western-style centralized government and democratic system in Central Asia never made sense. Tragically, Washington learned yet again that people worldwide insist on governing themselves. Just as the early Americans made clear to the globe-spanning British empire in the late eighteenth century.

However, the administration should have had an evacuation plan to implement as it began withdrawing troops. Especially since intelligence agencies reportedly offered pessimistic estimates about the situation in Afghanistan. The grossest misconduct, worst irresponsibility, and most outrageous betrayal was failing to get thousands of Afghans who served America out before the Taliban took over. The former's desperation is obvious and obviously warranted. Hopefully those still crowding Kabul airport will make it out. However, untold numbers are stranded elsewhere in the country, many hiding to avoid discovery and capture. Even those currently in Kabul might not get past the Taliban to enter the airport. For this situation the Biden administration bears a terrible responsibility.

Still, virtually no one, and especially the uber-hawks calling for the U.S. to stick around, forever and beyond if necessary, imagined the Kabul government's swift collapse. Last week they were offering elaborate plans to save what proved to be a Potemkin state and military rapidly sliding into history's storied trash bin. Given this record, GOP partisans are the last people with any credibility to criticize the objectives and competence of the Biden administration.

Yet Republican Party leaders, hopelessly compromised by their refusal to defend the American republic from internal enemies and willingness to continue cooperating with a president who put personal ambition beyond all else, have been at their sanctimonious best. Indeed, Donald Trump took the lead, with the absence of shame that we all came to expect, calling on Joe Biden "to resign in disgrace for what he has allowed to happen to Afghanistan," which was Trump's plan too. Although the latter claimed that he would have managed a more competent withdrawal, he failed to do so in four years, even increasing U.S. troop levels along the way.

Former president George W. Bush naturally made an appearance, calling the withdrawal "a mistake." Of course, Bush also defended his decision to launch endless war in Central Asia. He claimed the deployment had kept America safe, ignoring the fact that twenty years, thousands of lives, and trillions of dollars could not build a state which the Afghans themselves would defend.

Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX) called the Afghan denouement "an unmitigated disaster of epic proportions." Indeed, he insisted, "this will be a stain on Biden's presidency, and I think he is going to have blood on his hands for what they did." McCaul went on to blame Barack Obama for following Bush's withdrawal schedule in Iraq: "Remember, it was Obama and the vice president, at that time, Biden, who decided to withdraw completely out of Iraq, and look what happened."

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy charged that the withdrawal was a "mistake that will haunt us for decades." Although opposed to an investigation of the assault on the Capitol, he demanded one of intelligence assessments of Afghanistan. Rep. Elizabeth Cheney (R-WY) complained that both presidents Biden and Trump "walked down this path of legitimizing the Taliban, of perpetuating this fantasy, telling the American people that the Taliban were a partner for peace." Ironically, her father took a lead role in promoting both the Afghan and Iraqi disasters and remains unrepentant, apparently oblivious to the mass death and devastation that his policies wreaked.

Even Sen. Ben Sasse (R-NE), one of the few GOP legislators not taking instructions from Mar-a-Lago, went into full militarist mode, claiming that "the unmitigated disaster in Afghanistan—the shameful, Saigon-like abandonment of Kabul, the brutalization of Afghan women, and the slaughter of our allies—is the predictable outcome of the Trump-Biden doctrine of weakness. History must be clear about this: American troops didn't lose this war—Donald Trump and Joe Biden deliberately decided to lose." Sasse seemed to forget that the Afghans, of both the Taliban and America's faux state ally, had been doing most of the fighting recently and therefore had something to do with the result.

It is worth reminding Americans that George W. Bush and the war-happy congressional Republican caucus, backed by a militaristic Neocon infrastructure and ever-interventionist foreign policy establishment, were the ultimate authors of the Afghan debacle, and the even worse Iraqi saga. Terrorism did not arise in a vacuum, but from a highly interventionist foreign policy. The more dictatorships Washington supported, foreigners Washington killed, occupations

Washington undertook and underwrote, and countries Washington bombed and invaded, the more enemies Washington made. And some of them found ways to strike back, sometimes in hideous ways.

The necessary and proper mission in Afghanistan was to destroy or disable al-Qaeda and punish the Taliban for hosting a terrorist group, signaling that any government which did the same in the future would face similar retaliation. These objectives were achieved within weeks.

Sticking around to nation build was a mix of madness and hubris. It certainly was not a rational response to terrorist threats: 9/11 had nothing to do with Afghanistan, being planned, funded, and organized elsewhere. Trying to occupy all the ungoverned and badly governed territories on earth would be an equally mad and arrogant strategy—and equally ineffective.

As costly as was Afghanistan, Iraq more fully showcased Republican callousness, arrogance, and irresponsibility. Bush launched the war based on a lie, destroyed a country, loosed terrorists, empowered Iran, and caused endless murder and mayhem. Thousands of Americans died. Tens of thousands were wounded, many grievously. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were killed. Millions were displaced. Minority religious communities were destroyed and their members dispersed, many abroad. Nearly twenty years later Iraq remains a political wreck, better than under Saddam Hussein, but not much more. It is currently rated “Not Free” by the group Freedom House, which reported that “democratic governance is impeded in practice by corruption and security threats.”

Biden blundered in how he mishandled the withdrawal from Afghanistan. However, Republicans have no credibility to attack him. They are responsible for the worst foreign policy mistakes in recent decades. Having done so much damage to America, they should shut up and show a little remorse for their terrible judgment and behavior.

*Doug Bandow is a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute. A former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan, he is author of Foreign Follies: America's New Global Empire.*