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Biden Was Right to Leave Afghanistan, But Sanctions are for Sore Losers



President Joe Biden meeting with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chairman Abdullah Abdullah, June 25, 2021. Photograph Source: The White House – Public Domain

Washington's commentariat lost it recently. Amid howls from neocons that the Afghan war should never end, amid much gnashing of teeth and tearing of hair by Biden's gutless allies in the Democratic party over the initial debacle of the withdrawal – a debacle that lasted all of two days, before Biden got it under control and airlifted tens of thousands of people out of the country, which went astonishingly smoothly until another debacle, when a suicide bomber slaughtered a crowd and the U.S., predictably and horribly, responded by

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killing children – amid all these laments and jeremiads was lost the simple truth that Biden ended a grotesque abomination, a deformity of historic proportions. The U.S. bombed, killed and maimed Afghans for 20 years, FOR NO REASON. It meddled malevolently in Afghan affairs for far longer – going back to the Carter administration’s schemes to destroy secular Afghanistan’s Soviet ally, FOR THE SHEER WICKEDNESS OF IT. It was high time someone put a stop to this. Despite horrific butchery at the last minute, Biden did that.

Immediately, however, Biden slapped sanctions on Afghanistan. The country now joins a very big club, including Venezuela, Cuba, Iran and others, of those the U.S. aims to starve into regime change. How’s that going? Well might you ask. It appears to be utterly ineffective at anything aside from tormenting ordinary people. In the face of sanctions, leaders clutch at power more ferociously than ever, because they see themselves endangered, while cancer patients can’t buy chemo. In short, these sanctions will break Afghanistan financially, probably cause famine and will doubtless engender huge emigration, while serving no purpose besides random cruelty, because sanctions are war by economic means. The analogy is a medieval siege. Sanctions prove that Washington isn’t done with Afghanistan, just as the bloodshed on the eve of departure did.

When ISIS-K bombed an airport gate, the media went berserk. CNN was particularly egregious, chortling over how Americans had lost faith in Biden, thus egging him on to do something abysmal. (He obliged.) You would have thought suicide bombing was new to Afghanistan, brought there by Biden’s supposedly lily-livered retreat. Well, hello? Soldiers and Afghans died in droves from all sorts of bombs during the reigns of Trump, Obama and Bush, without this media feeding frenzy. What was different this time was that corporate media was shocked by Biden’s unyielding retreat, while the world saw that the U.S. lost, was withdrawing and, while departing, was attacked.

This humiliation blew all of western media’s gaskets. One can only conclude that if not for the retreat itself and the huge U.S. airlift of its people and Afghan allies out of the country, this suicide bomber attack would have merited the media neglect that characterized its approach to the Afghan mayhem for at least a decade. The airport bombing was terrible, but it certainly wasn’t the first terrible thing to happen in the 20 years that the U.S. waged war there. It is to Biden’s credit that he did not buckle under the media abuse and suspend the military departure. He displayed more principle than any of his three predecessors.

What is NOT to his credit are the corpses of seven Afghan children, killed in a U.S. drone attack in revenge for the ISIS bombing. But heaven help anyone who stands between a

U.S. president and revenge. And this time, of course, no one did. What that drone slaughter revealed was, once again, the criminality and indiscriminate murder of American drone warfare. It should be outlawed, like chemical and biological weapons. (Ho, ho. They're banned, but that hasn't stopped their use.) How about instead of deploying drones to slaughter families, we deploy our vastly overfunded CIA to find out who exactly arranges suicide bombings? Cause it sure ain't children. And whatever intelligence our military relies on for these drone murders is pretty darn crappy. We Americans spend a fortune on intelligence agencies. Let the CIA take a break from watering its poppy fields and gather a bit of human intel – without killing anybody – so we're not blowing six-year-olds to bits.

While we're on the subject of murdered children, there have been enough of them at Washington's hands in the Middle East to condemn all our presidents, going back decades for war crimes. There should be no more. That means – let's spell this out for unrepentant imperialist readers – no American bombing or drone campaign in Afghanistan now that the U.S. has left. Because if the U.S. military keeps bombing, it'll just keep filling pediatric wards with maimed toddlers and graves with murdered kids. Our war machine apparently has no idea who its Reapers roast or otherwise dispatch to the hereafter. It shoots first, then claims it got a few bad guys, which is usually total garbage, its preferred targets being wedding parties and funeral processions. The price in innocent blood is criminal, to say the least.

Meanwhile Biden has agreed to a retreat from Iraq, for U.S. troops to exit that country by the end of 2021. Barring any final minute suicide bombers, this departure may actually proceed peacefully. And then Biden will have notched two successes, ending two forever wars (though in Afghanistan, the U.S. went out as it came in and as it comported itself throughout – randomly killing civilians. That's also how the U.S. behaved in Iraq; hopefully, however, the exit will be different.).

But don't expect corporate media to celebrate the close of these two execrable wars. No. Our pundits are far more likely to pontificate sententious drivel about the decline of U.S. power and prestige, how calamitous that is and what we should do about it. Hint: they think starting new wars would be a fine flexing of imperial muscle. Unquestioned in all this predictable verbiage is the undesirability of declining U.S. power. But it has its upside, like maybe the termination of the U.S. empire before that empire terminates what's left of our republic and its democracy. So don't listen to the pundits. The U.S. would

bomb China, if it were up to our preening media hacks and the politicians and military bigwigs they fawn over.

Too bad for them. There will soon be no more American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the Middle East that leaves Syria, where the U.S. has disgraced itself by burning wheat fields and stealing oil. The only people who want us there are the Kurds, and any exit should carefully coordinate with them – so the U.S. doesn't stab an ally in the back, as it did under Trump.

Neocons claim that that's exactly what we did to our Afghan allies, but that's a false comparison. Our Afghan allies were not a beleaguered at times persecuted minority – they ran the government, quite corruptly. They held power and directed a national army. But one thing they did that the Kurds should consider: they saw which way the wind blew and switched sides. In other words, it would be wise for Kurdish leaders to negotiate with the Syrian government and its Russian allies tout de suite. The U.S. won't be in Syria forever, and as we saw in Afghanistan, when Washington starts leaving – things fall apart very fast.

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