

# TURNER: The Biden Doctrine

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## COMMENTARY:

The conventional wisdom seems to be that, by selecting the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee - a veteran of more than 35 years as a Washington insider - as his vice-presidential running mate, Sen. Barack Obama has more than adequately compensated for his own total lack of foreign policy and national security experience. I have been waiting patiently but in vain for two months on the assumption the media would investigate and report on [Sen. Joe Biden's](#) record, but it hasn't happened.

The conduct of our foreign relations and the command of our military are among the most important functions entrusted to the president under our Constitution, and Mr. Biden's record in these areas is abysmal. From his first year in the Senate in 1973, he was a consistent foe of the American military.

When the Armed Services Committee recommended money for the Trident submarine, the B-1 bomber, and the MX missile (three critical upgrades to our strategic nuclear deterrent triad), Mr. Biden voted against all three - as well as against every effort by our military to protect the American people against nuclear missile attack. When the Senate voted to provide our troops with superior equipment like the M-1 Abrams tank, Joe Biden regularly voted "nay." He even voted to make all covert operations illegal (and to prohibit all intelligence collection inside foreign countries where local laws prohibited foreign espionage) and in 1986 bragged he had personally undermined Reagan administration covert operations while a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee by simply threatening to "leak" them.

A look at his actions when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990 is instructive. Just hours after the Aug. 2 invasion, Joe Biden declared on the Senate floor that Saddam was "the world's most belligerent dictator" who, in recent months, had "boldly continued his drive for nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction." He declared the United States "must act, and we must act forcefully. ... History will not forgive us if we do not do everything in our power to stop Saddam Hussein."

Two months later, his courage had apparently waned, as Mr. Biden cautioned that the United States should not engage in a "pre-emptive strike." (One wonders if he would have characterized the D-Day landing at Normandy to liberate Europe as "pre-emptive" as well.) Still, Mr. Biden declared he would support the use of military force if authorized by "a decision by the U.N. Security Council" - which occurred Nov. 29 with Resolution 678.

However, when it came time to actually take a stand against blatant international aggression and to help the Security Council enforce the United Nations Charter, Mr. Biden decided the world community should instead rely on "sanctions." Just before the Jan. 12, 1991, Senate vote, Mr. Biden declared to his colleagues that "the principle of collective security" was really "not a vital interest" of the United States. Who needs things like NATO? America can go it alone.

As for his earlier concerns about Saddam's quest for nuclear weapons and Iraq's other weapons of mass destruction programs, Mr. Biden actually speculated to his colleagues that perhaps, if we just left him alone for five years, Saddam might be "struck by lightning," eliminating any need to deal seriously with the problem. Thus we

have the “Biden Doctrine” - gut the military, appease aggressors, and then pray anxiously for lightning to preserve world peace!

Fewer than 150 Americans died as a result of enemy action during Operation Desert Storm. But, in fairness to Mr. Biden, had the Congress followed his lead and voted to deny our military Abrams tanks, long-range cruise missiles (and destroyers from which to launch them), Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft, F-14 “Tomcat” fighters, Nimitz-class aircraft carriers, SAM-D (Patriot) missiles, and the other sophisticated weapons that kept our casualties so low - all of them weapons Mr. Biden voted against over the years - we might well have lost the tens- to hundreds-of-thousands of American lives liberating Kuwait that Mr. Biden had confidently predicted.

In part because of the incredible superiority of the Abrams tank, by the time the war ended coalition forces had destroyed an estimated 4,000 Iraqi tanks without having had a single Abrams destroyed by hostile fire.

When Desert Storm began, Iraq had the third-largest army in the world (the United States was fifth). Without the critically important weapons Mr. Biden had sought to deny our troops, we might well have paid for his frugality with the lives of large numbers of brave American men and women in uniform.

Although Joe Biden was of military age throughout the Vietnam War, he managed to secure numerous educational draft deferments and then found a doctor to certify he had suffered from asthma as a child. His disdain for the welfare of our military was evident not solely by his votes to deny them virtually every major modern weapons system they requested; he even voted to deny funds for commissaries where our underpaid troops could purchase food for their families.

Apparently having learned from experience, in 2002 Mr. Biden voted in favor of going to war in Iraq. (As late as April 2003, a CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll reported 79 percent of Americans still thought the Iraq war was justified). But when public opinion shifted, Mr. Biden quickly reverted to form, declared his vote was a “mistake,” and tried to sabotage the president’s conduct of the war (and thus guarantee victory for our enemies, as he had done in Indochina in May 1973).

Although in the 2006 Hamdan case the Supreme Court affirmed that, under our Constitution, “Congress cannot direct the conduct of [military] campaigns,” drawing on his vast military experience (a brief mandatory stint in college ROTC - which he flunked), Mr. Biden confidently declared that sending reinforcements to Iraq (the so-called “surge”) was “absolutely the wrong strategy” and did everything possible to undermine the commander in chief’s decision. Once again, history shows Joe Biden got it terribly wrong.

Today, few Senate Democrats can match Joe Biden’s experience in the field of foreign affairs. He has a long track record dating back 35 years - a record Mr. Obama obviously admires. But it is a record of appeasement, weakness, vacillation and incredibly poor judgment. It is a record of usurping the constitutional powers of the president, undermining and trying to cripple our intelligence community, and in the process betraying the brave sacrifices of millions of our men and women in uniform. I have testified at hearings chaired by Mr. Biden time and again over many years, and I’ve always found him fair, gracious, and often charming and personable. But the thought that his views may soon become the foreign and defense policies of this great nation genuinely frightens me.

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