

America's prayer? Not three more years of 'Sleepy' Joe Biden: Liberals thought Trump was a disgrace but have found their saviour to be a shambling, reckless danger to them and the world, writes TOM LEONARD

By Tom Leonard for the Daily Mail

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On a card in his breast pocket, [Joe Biden](#) keeps a tally of members of the U.S. armed services who have died in [Iraq](#) and [Afghanistan](#). Until Thursday, none had died on his watch.

The deaths of at least 13 American servicemen and more than 150 others in a double suicide bomb and gun attack in Kabul has plunged Biden into the greatest crisis of his presidency.

It has also helped reveal the essence of the man who said he would lead us out of the chaos of the Trump era.

A politician who came to power on a ticket of competence, empathy, foreign policy experience and simply not being [Donald Trump](#) has been found out.

And some of his former supporters now think that even Trump might have made a better fist of America's catastrophic departure from Afghanistan.

Liberal Americans who, from the street parties of Chicago to the dinner parties of Manhattan, rejoiced in his election as the great saviour are waking up to the fact that his feet are most certainly made of clay.

This in an America which is still recovering from the Trump years, when they put up with a president regarded as a worldwide laughing stock and national embarrassment.

Suddenly, they're beginning to realise that what came after Trump could be even worse.



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Biden's faltering, rambling public appearances following the ignominious retreat from Kabul — coupled with the evident fury of Western allies over what has happened in Afghanistan — have been a hammer blow.

In my 15 years of reporting from America, I have seldom seen such a sense of shock and disappointment.

Where there was hope, now I see concern — genuine fear that Biden, flailing already at the age of 78, will be here for another three years.

The Biden/Harris poster — he and Kamala Harris, his Vice-President, were the so-called dream team — has gone missing from the front window of a house on my block and, I don't doubt, from many other homes. Biden's name is no longer an easy topic for New York dinner conversations.

Everybody here used to love 'Joe', a politician of principle, but politics is suddenly a tricky subject — no one particularly wants to admit they backed a phoney to replace Trump the monster.

The tragedy is that it was all so predictable. But because of their loathing of Trump, many who voted for Biden wilfully ignored his evident inadequacies.

The country's cravenly pro-Democrat media turned a blind eye to the obvious for too long. They chose to forget that Barack Obama reportedly used to roll his eyes at Biden's shortcomings as a senator and even as his Vice-President.

They overlooked the fact that Obama had to be dragged kicking and screaming to support his White House bid, suspecting he'd be terrible in the Oval Office.

The most striking thing about Biden's woefully uninspiring presidential campaign, as I reported on it, was the fact that it was based on one central premise — that Biden had the best chance of beating Trump.

The rest hardly mattered: the question of his intelligence, his judgment and his competence was of secondary importance.

The U.S. — and the world — is now paying the price for such misguided myopia.

While Biden spent 50 years working his way up to the top job in Washington — convincing millions that here, finally, was a man who could reunite America and restore its world leadership — it's taken just a few days for the whole edifice to crumble.

True, polls show that most Americans want to get out of Afghanistan and research has shown that few of them, typically, are much exercised by what's going on around the other side of the world.

And while ordinary voters were unsettled, to put it mildly, by those shocking pictures of Afghans falling out of the sky from a U.S. transport plane, they mostly accepted Biden's casual assurances that there was always likely to be some collateral damage from pulling out of the troubled country.

The images of dead U.S. servicemen returning in flag-draped coffins will be a very different matter, however.

Nothing is quite so likely to grab ordinary Americans' attention nor bring home to them the terrible weakness behind Biden's claim that he was pulling out of Afghanistan to save U.S. lives.



Tom Leonard: A politician who came to power on a ticket of competence, empathy, foreign policy experience and simply not being Donald Trump (pictured) has been found out

How darkly ironic now seem Biden's words from a few days ago when he was defending his decision to ignore his generals and specialists on Afghanistan: 'How many more generations of America's daughters and sons would you have me send to fight Afghans — Afghanistan's civil war, when Afghan troops will not? How many more lives — American lives — is it worth? How many endless rows of headstones at Arlington National Cemetery?'

If the obvious answer to that question now is 13, that's probably only the start. The latest attack was the deadliest day the U.S. military has had in Afghanistan since 2011.

Among Biden's many pledges to the American people, the most profound was that after the rollercoaster ride of the Trump presidency, when crazy military entanglement often seemed only a Tweet away, he would protect them.

The Senate old-timer, best known for making embarrassing gaffes and delivering interminably dull speeches, might not have been the world's most exciting politician, said his PR spinners, but he was at least reliable.

President Biden's reputation as 'Mr Safe Pair of Hands' now lies in shreds at the bottom of a stinking, blood-soaked sewer in Kabul. His Senate-floor gaffes have translated into grotesque blunders on a world stage.

Biden has been particularly outspoken in the past about his determination to protect American servicemen.

He rarely wastes an opportunity to remind people about his late son Beau's Iraq war service record (particularly if it distracts attention from his chaotic, drug-troubled other son Hunter) and likes to end speeches by saying 'May God protect our troops'.

He didn't spare his country that pious invocation on Thursday evening when, after a day of embarrassing White House silence over the Kabul outrage, he finally addressed his country.

What we saw was a frail, confused-looking old man reading ponderously and woodenly, off an autocue, a speech that appeared to have been intentionally written with short, staccato-like sentences and few long words so he wouldn't stumble in his hour of need.

'It's been a tough day,' the President began in his usual folksy way before getting swiftly to how, having lost a military veteran son himself — though Beau died of cancer not an ISIS bomb — he and wife Jill understood what the families of Kabul must be going through.

The Bidens' 'hearts ache for all those Afghan families who lost loved ones, including small children, who have been wounded in this vicious attack, and we're outraged as well as heartbroken,' he said, in contrast to his stance a few days ago when he waved away terrible footage of Afghans falling from U.S. planes as old news.

Large numbers of his fellow countrymen and women are suckers for sentimentality, but the use of his son's death in such circumstances seemed so shameless that some were repelled by it.

They'll remember that only last month Biden was arrogantly scoffing at the inevitability of Taliban victory and breezily foreseeing an orderly U.S. withdrawal.

So much for this supposed foreign policy expert's powers of prediction. And judging by the scepticism in yesterday's U.S. media, Americans are similarly unimpressed by his tough-guy assurance that: 'We will not forgive. We will not forget. We will hunt you down and make you pay.' How exactly does the U.S. do that when it's desperately trying to get out of Afghanistan — home to the group that is believed to be responsible — by Tuesday?

'Here's what you need to know: these ISIS terrorists will not win. We will rescue the Americans in there. We will get our Afghan allies out, and our mission will go on,' Biden said. 'Americans will not be intimidated.'

If the last few days haven't been about the world's greatest military power losing in the most humiliating manner possible after being intimidated by a bunch of rag-tag guerrillas, what have they been about?

Like so much in his latest terrifyingly unconvincing address, Biden's hollow promises seemed to have been spoken by a man who had seen them for the first time when they appeared on his screen.

He did no better without the autocue, giving a Press conference in which he answered a set of questions from a string of pre-selected journalists before stumbling when a reporter from Fox News — very much not part of the cosy media cabal that has cushioned the Biden administration from awkward questions — pressed him on what he took the blame for.

'You said the buck stops with you. Do you bear any responsibility for the way things have unfolded the last two weeks?,' said the journalist. 'I bear responsibility for fundamentally all that's happened of late,' Biden responded.

Except he then didn't. He stood by his controversial decision to withdraw troops so rapidly and — in what has become his default mode since taking office — blamed everything once again on Donald Trump for making the initial decision to withdraw. It is an excuse that is getting very tired, and even his supporters know it.

Biden has previously suffered two brain aneurysms and has a heart condition which makes the muscle beat too fast, causing dizziness and confusion.

Even an NHS cardiologist in Britain last week joined the growing chorus of voices questioning whether Biden is physically and mentally up to being President.

Alarmingly, at the press conference the Leader of the Free World gave every impression of finding the job too much: some of his sentences were worryingly incoherent and at one point he suddenly stopped talking, bowing down his head on to his hands as they gripped his notebook.

It looked like he was praying for deliverance — unless he was looking at the prompt cards he famously took to his first press conference.

Significantly, Democrats and their supporters are openly daring to break ranks with Biden.

And already, just a few months after his January inauguration, Republicans are demanding his head, calling on him to resign or be impeached.

The Kabul massacre 'was the direct result of horribly misguided decisions from President Biden' said congressman John Katko, the most senior Republican on the Homeland Security Committee.

'Our Commander-in-Chief has been missing in action and has failed to rise to this pivotal moment in our history.'

Democratic Senator Robert Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, joined Republicans in questioning the Biden administration's flawed security arrangements at Kabul airport, while few of the President's party have risen to his defence.

Many Democrats still fear that any criticism of Biden, however deserved, will damage their party.

Yet even a columnist from the Left-wing New York Times attacked such craven behaviour, saying 'their political fate is nothing next to the fate of Afghans on the wrong side of the Taliban'.

Dismay in all quarters is undoubtedly mounting. And while Democrats won't publicly claim, like senior Republicans, that Biden has 'blood on his hands', his withdrawal strategy is so lamentable that many of them must surely privately agree.

How could he possibly have allowed his administration's disastrous decision to abandon the Bagram U.S. Air Base, about 25 miles away from Kabul airport and far more secure, before the civilian evacuation was finished, they ask. (The military was ordered to leave the base in the middle of the night without its new Afghan commander being informed).

How could the U.S. have allowed a reported \$85 billion worth of military hardware to fall into the hands of the delighted Taliban? According to Republican Congressman and former Navy reservist Jim Banks, they now have hundreds of aeroplanes and helicopters, tens of thousands of armoured vehicles and 600,000 small arms and light weapons courtesy of U.S. forces.

The fact is that in a few short months of his Presidency, Biden has managed to undo any gains in stability and democracy made during the West's intervention in Afghanistan, leaving the Taliban stronger, better equipped and more powerful than ever, while the suicide attacks demonstrated that the remnants of ISIS have also found support there.

What a terrible betrayal of the thousands of lives lost — British, American, Afghan and others — in the past 20 years.

The ramifications could not be more serious. It is not just that enemies of the West such as ISIS have taken immediate advantage to unleash bloodshed and carnage.

There is also the danger that the chaos, disruption and terror in Afghanistan might spread across the border into nuclear-armed Pakistan, which is beset by threats from radical Islamist terrorist groups that security experts warn will feel empowered by the U.S. retreat.

The humiliation of America will also inevitably encourage China and Russia to become ever more brazen and aggressive.

It's difficult to imagine how even Donald Trump could have left a bigger mess in so short a time. And yet the world has another three years of Biden at the helm.

It's a terrifying thought but, according to former U.S. ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley, it could be even more bleak.

'Should Biden step down or be removed for his handling of Afghanistan? Yes,' she tweeted.

'But that would leave us with [far-Left deputy President] Kamala Harris which would be ten times worse. God help us.'

God help us, indeed. Joe Biden warned the Kabul bombers that 'we will not forgive, we will not forget'. Nor will the watching world ever forgive or forget what he's done in Afghanistan.