

How Biden Flubbed Town Hall Foreign Policy Question

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Most of our leaders are still hell-bent on preserving America's imperial power at any cost: endless wars, climate catastrophe, mass extinctions, and the terrifying risk of a final, apocalyptic mass-casualty war—most likely a nuclear war.

Toward the end of Joe Biden's October 15 [town hall session](#), a Trump supporter asked Biden the only foreign policy question of the night. "So peace is breaking out all over the world," the questioner claimed. "Our troops are coming home. Serbia is talking to Kosovo. And the Arabs and Israelis are talking peace, which I believe is a modern-day miracle, what's going on. Does President Trump's foreign policy deserve some credit?"

Instead (Biden) endorsed some of the most deceptive elements of Trump's propaganda, dropped some clangers of his own and, in a classic Freudian slip, laid bare his own enduring commitment to American imperialism.

This question encapsulated all the smoke and mirrors that Trump has used to confuse the public and obscure his [broken promises](#) to end America's wars, bring our troops home and build a more peaceful world. This was a fantastic opportunity for Biden to clarify the reality of Trump's [abysmal record](#) and explain what he would do instead. But he didn't. Instead he endorsed some of the most deceptive elements of Trump's propaganda, dropped some clangers of his own and, in a classic Freudian slip, laid bare his own enduring commitment to American imperialism.

In response to the questioner's designation of Israel's deal with the UAE and Bahrain as a "modern-day miracle," Biden simply rolled over and said, "I complement the president on the deal with Israel." What he should have said was something like this:

"The UAE and Bahrain are ruled by dictators with absolute, despotic power who represent neither their own people nor the Arab world, let alone the people of Palestine—who gained nothing from these deals. Since these countries were not at war with Israel to begin with, these accords have nothing to do with peace. They are more about flooding the Middle East with even more U.S. weapons and forming new military alliances against Iran. Yes, we need peace deals between Israel and its Arab neighbors, but they must be deals that truly bring peace, end Israel's illegal military occupations and advance the equal rights of Palestinians and Israelis."

Biden didn't respond to the mention of the White House meeting between Serbia and Kosovo, but he could have explained that it had to be postponed when President Hashim Thaci of Kosovo [was indicted](#) for war crimes by an international court at The Hague. Thaci is charged with organizing the killing of hundreds of Serbian prisoners of war to sell their

internal organs on the international transplant market under cover of NATO bombing in 1999. When the indictment was unveiled in June 2020, Thaci was literally in his plane on the way to meet Serbian leaders at the White House, and had to make a U-turn over the Atlantic to return to Kosovo.

Twenty-one years after NATO dropped 23,000 bombs on Serbia and illegally annexed Kosovo, neither Serbia nor nearly half the countries in the world have recognized Kosovo's independence from Serbia. Biden could have pointed to this as a case study in why the U.S. must stop waging regime change wars, organizing coups in other countries, and installing CIA-backed gangsters and war criminals like Thaci to rule them.

As for the critically important statement by the town hall questioner that "Our troops are coming home," Biden claimed that there are more troops in Afghanistan now than when he and Obama left office. That appears to be incorrect, since there were 11,000 troops there in December 2016 and [8,600 U.S. troops](#) as of September 22nd, despite the lack of confirmation from the Pentagon on further reductions that Trump had promised.

However, Biden could have simply compared the number of troops brought home by Obama and Trump, which would have been an impressive comparison. Obama reduced U.S. troop levels abroad from 483,670 in [December 2008](#), just before he took office, to 275,850 by [December 2016](#). If the latest figures from the Trump administration are correct, there are still over 238,000 U.S. military personnel overseas.

So Obama reduced the U.S.'s overseas military presence by 43%, while Trump has reduced it by no more than another 14%. With Trump claiming he is "bringing our troops home" in every stump speech, why on Earth is Biden not trumpeting the fact that he and Obama brought home five times more troops than Trump has? Why is Biden running from that record? Is he planning to reverse that trend if elected? Millions of American voters would like to know.

A disappointing aspect of Biden's response was his habitual readiness to take the low road, smearing China's President Xi Jinping, criticizing Trump for even trying to make peace with North Korea, and repeating an [unsubstantiated](#) story about Russia paying "bounties" to the Taliban for killing U.S. troops. A better response from Biden would have been to fault Trump for not following through on the peace initiative with North Korea and for stirring up new Cold Wars with Russia and China, when the American people want their leaders to focus on existing threats like the pandemic, our devastated economy and the climate crisis.

The U.S. did indeed rule an empire in the twentieth century, albeit a neocolonial empire in an anti-colonial and post-colonial world that had to be sustained by a whole web of myths and lies.

But perhaps the most [revealing moment](#) of the evening was Biden's Freudian slip about the imperial character of America's relations with its allies and the rest of the world:

"You know, we've always ruled - (corrects himself) we've been most effective as a world leader, in my humble opinion - not just by the exercise of our power - we're the most powerful nation in the world - but the power of our example. That's what's led the rest of the world to follow us, on almost anything."

The U.S. did indeed rule an empire in the twentieth century, albeit a [neocolonial](#) empire in

an anti-colonial and post-colonial world that had to be sustained by a [whole web](#) of myths and lies. But now we are standing at a crossroads in American and world history. America's history of war, militarism and international coercion has reached its final stage in the terminal decline of an increasingly corrupt and decadent American empire. Yet most of our leaders are still hell-bent on preserving America's imperial power at any cost: endless wars, climate catastrophe, mass extinctions, and the terrifying risk of a final, apocalyptic mass-casualty war—most likely a nuclear war.

But there is another path leading away from this crossroads, one that Joe Biden should embrace, which involves redirecting our country's resources and energies away from unsustainable imperial power through a peaceful transition to a sustainable, prosperous post-imperial future.

It would have been inspiring to hear Biden say that his goals would be to put an end to U.S. efforts at regime change; to significantly reduce the threat of nuclear war and join the UN Treaty on the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons; to free up hundreds of billions of dollars per year for domestic needs by right-sizing the Pentagon budget; and to put peaceful diplomacy front and center.

That would have been a paradigm-changing answer that would have motivated millions of Americans across the political spectrum—from leftists to anti-imperialist Republicans and libertarians—who long to live in a peaceful, just and sustainable world.

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