

# In 1991 Biden Called It ‘Tyranny’ for Just One Man to Decide War

His Senate Words – and Dem 2020 Peace Vow – Are Blown Up Along With ‘Militants’ in Syria

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*Did Joe Biden read the [Democratic platform](#) that he ran under? Elect us and we will “move away from military intervention” in the Middle East. Diplomacy will protect Syrians’ human needs and rights and “find a peaceful resolution for this horrific war.” All the “forever wars” will end.*

Instead, Biden and the military men under his command did what the military is supposed to do: kill and destroy – or, as they prefer to put it, drop “precision-guided munitions” on [“targets.”](#) Among targets of the February 25<sup>th</sup> attack on Syria were at least 22 people.

[Congressional reactions](#) did not follow party lines. Several Democrats objected to the President’s violation of the constitutional war power of Congress. Some of their GOP colleagues praised the bombing, but Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) saw no right to attack a sovereign country. His father, ex-Representative Ron Paul (R-TX), called for Biden’s [impeachment](#).

Few pay much attention to international laws against aggression, particularly three U.S. treaties prohibiting it. Forcible violation of the territorial rights of one state by another has been considered a war crime since the infamous trials following World War II.

But everything is good, from what administration spokesmen say. Don’t grieve for the 22. They were [all “believed”](#) to be members of “Iran-backed militias” accused of recent rocket attacks on US targets in Iraq. (Rest assured that no children, women, or non-militant men are ever harmed by our clever weapons, only “militants,” “insurgents,” and “terrorists.”)

The media reported that the raid was designed to “send a message” to Iran. Whatever that message said, it was expensive. You can send one far cheaper by e-mail, phone, fax, or airmail letter. You’d think the cost would concern the budget-minded congressional Republicans, if nothing else does.

As far as relations with Iran were concerned, the Dems’ platform pledged to call off the race to war; reject the goal of regime change in Tehran; emphasize “diplomacy, de-escalation,

and regional dialogue”; and restore the nuclear agreement. If any of those things were in that message, you probably wouldn’t need to send it via bomb.

Our defense establishment tells us that the aggression was “defensive,” yet also “retaliatory”: We attacked Syria because our forces in Iraq had been attacked, though not by Syria. (Needless to say, our forces had a perfect right to be in Iraq. As California’s Senator S. I. Hayakawa once said about Panama, “We stole it fair and square.”)

What about the president’s decision to commit an act of war, when Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution reserves that power to Congress?

According to an aide of the [National Security Council](#), “Biden acted under his constitutional authority to defend US and deter the risk of additional attacks.” (I’m quoting a Bloomberg story by eight writers. It said the aide “commented on condition of anonymity.” I would want to be anonymous too, if I had to dispense stuff like that.) Don’t bother searching through your Constitution for such authority; it’s not there.

Biden did not lose much time before tending to what the platform called “this horrific war.” The five weeks of abstention compare with 11 weeks into Trump’s term before he bombed Syria. Obama, before him, had waited five years before initiating his bombing of Syrians. Of course Trump and Obama did plenty of killing elsewhere throughout their terms. Biden is just getting started.

Biden (2021) Should Listen to Biden (1991)

Thirty years ago, President George H. W. Bush was massing US troops in the Saudi desert, preparing for war with Iraq over its seizure of Kuwait. Bush and his yes-men in the Defense and State Departments contended that the president, as commander-in-chief of the military, had the authority to start a war.

Joseph R. Biden Jr., chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, called a hearing on “[The Constitutional Roles](#) of the Congress and the President in Declaring and Waging War.” In an introductory speech, Senator Biden found the Bush view of the war power at odds with the Constitution. The Founders, he said, took great pains to ensure that the new government would differ from that of King George III. The chief difference was how the decision to go to war would be made.

“In England the king alone could decide to take a nation to war.” Here, the legislature would have that power. “The Constitution’s language says that the war power rests in the Congress.... The Constitution’s founders all understood this to be a key principle of our republic.... Yes, the president is the commander-in-chief....”

Senator Biden thereupon quoted Alexander Hamilton, who wrote about the (then) proposed Constitution in *The Federalist*, 69. “The president is to be commander-in-chief of the army and navy... It would amount to nothing more than the supreme command and direction of the military and naval forces as first general and admiral....” His authority would be much inferior to that of the British king, which “extends to the *declaring* of war and the raising and *regulating* of fleets and armies” – all of which would be the legislature’s functions under the Constitution.

“In short,” said the senator, “Congress decides whether to make war, and the president decides how to do so.... We have been told that the congressional debate on war could tie the president’s hands or limit his discretion..... Exactly right. Americans once lived under a system where one man had unfettered choice to decide by himself whether we could go to war or not go to war, and we launched a revolution to free ourselves from the tyranny of such a system.”

Senator Biden noted that President Bush was claiming that his impending war on Iraq would uphold the rule of law by undoing Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. The former commented, “If the crisis is really about upholding the law of nations abroad, the President must start by upholding the law at home, and our law begins with the Constitution.”

Bush backed down and submitted to a congressional vote. It supported the war he wanted. Biden voted “nay.”

### Gullible and Contradictory

Having opposed Bush Senior’s war on Iraq over the Kuwait seizure, Biden avidly supported the second war on Iraq, started by Bush’s son, George W. It was based on “weapons of mass destruction,” which Bush Jr. falsely claimed that Iraq possessed and would likely give to terrorists.

[Biden fell for those lies](#) and, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, spoke in favor of a resolution (prepared in the White House) to let Bush decide whether war on Iraq would be warranted. The measure would be unconstitutional, for such a decision was up to Congress to make, not the president, as Biden himself had pointed out 11 years earlier.

Biden has shown similar gullibility in swallowing disputed allegations of Syrian use of poison gas and Russian “bounties” on lives of US servicemen in Afghanistan. Some US intelligence agents doubt that the bounty tale is true.

In foreign affairs, Biden is full of contradictions. Nine examples follow. *JoeBiden* –

- Opposed one Bush attack on Iraq and supported another.
- Ran for president on a promise of rejoining the nuclear agreement with Iran that Trump renounced, but hesitates to keep the promise, and now comes that “message.”
- Condemns the bombing of Yemeni civilians and the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, yet – without congressional permission – commits the US to [defend the Saudi monarchy](#) that committed those crimes.
- Talks of having the US, Europe, and Asia “work together to secure the peace,” while [confronting China](#) with US warships provocatively close to its coast.
- Renews the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the Russian Federation (New START) for five years, but heightens tensions by anti-Russian rhetoric and sanctions
- Considers the climate crisis a top concern, yet the world’s single biggest producer of [climate-changing gases](#) is the US military, and war intensifies their production.
- Resolves to work with allies on critical issues, but disregards his own country’s Congress.
- Has repeatedly paid homage to “the rule of law,” contrary to his positions in favor of lawless actions in Syria, Iraq, and Yugoslavia (Bill Clinton’s 1999 war).

- Conducts an act of war that is incompatible with the platform he ran under and his own comments about the war power, made to fellow senators 30 years ago.

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