

Is Biden Campaign Buying Republicans Through Patronage?

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Megan Cassella and Alice Miranda Ollstein [reported for the Politico](#) [1] yesterday that Joe Biden's transition team is vetting renegade Republicans for potential cabinet positions. The report didn't name the names but identified Biden's prospective national security team after being elected president as the key area where Republicans who forswear their allegiance to the GOP would be inducted.

The Politico report notes:

"National security is another traditional spot for cross-party appointments. Clinton tapped Republican Bill Cohen to lead the Department of Defense, while Obama had two GOP officials in that role: Robert Gates and Chuck Hagel.

"Gates was a holdover from the Bush administration, whom Obama kept on as a bipartisan gesture. But Gates didn't always agree with the president's decisions and offered harsh critiques of Obama and others in the Cabinet in a memoir he released after leaving the administration. Gates reserved some of his harshest criticism for Biden, saying the vice president had been 'wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades.'"

Although buying political loyalties through wheeling and dealing, horse-trading and patronage politics is common in Third World countries, it's the first time this stratagem has been adopted by the Biden campaign in the US politics. This fact helps explain myriads of renegade Republican groups, masquerading as PACs, that have sprung up in the election year, including the Lincoln Project, 43 Alumni for Biden, Never Trump movement and Republican Voters Against Trump, that have mounted a crusade against the Trump presidency.

Some of these dissident groups, such as 43 Alumni for Biden, are mainly comprised of the Bush-era former national security officials or are ideologically affiliated with late Senator John McCain's hawkish militarism that regard the Trump administration's non-interventionism as a perfidy to supposedly "lofty ideals" of American exceptionalism and "benevolent imperialism."

Although in its eagerness to oust Trump from presidency, neoliberal media is extolling these renegade Republicans for renouncing their loyalty to the GOP, their questionable affiliations and belligerent motives are being overlooked.

The George W. Bush administration is known to be the most hawkish and militarist

administration in the history of the United States. Ironically, while three US presidents have been accused of impeaching the Constitution for relatively minor offenses, including Bill Clinton for perjury and Donald Trump for allegedly using political influence to discredit opponents, no US president has ever been charged, let alone convicted, of waging devastating wars of aggression.

Unless impeachment proceedings are initiated against war criminals, including George Bush and Dick Cheney for invading Afghanistan and Iraq and Barack Obama and Joe Biden for waging proxy wars in Libya and Syria, the impeachment provisions in the US Constitution would serve as nothing more than a convenient tool for settling political scores.

As for the late Senator John McCain, though a decorated Vietnam War veteran who died battling cancer in 2018, McCain was a highly divisive and polarizing figure as a senator and was regarded by many Leftists as an inveterate neocon hawk, who vociferously exhorted Western military interventions not only in the Balkans in the nineties but also in Libya and Syria in 2011.

Though Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden would have no problem integrating hawkish Bush- and McCain-era Republican holdovers into his prospective national security team because he himself is no peacenik either, as Bob Gates sarcastically quipped, “The former vice president has been wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades.”

Before being elected as Obama’s vice president in 2008, as a longtime senator from Delaware and subsequently as the member and then the chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Joe Biden, alongside inveterate hawk Senator Joe Lieberman, was one of the principal architects of the Bosnia War in the Clinton administration in the nineties.

Reflecting on first black American president Barack Obama’s memorable 2008 presidential campaign, with little-known senator from Delaware, Joe Biden, as his running-mate, Glenn Kessler [wrote for the Washington Post](#) [2] in October 2008:

“The moment when Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr. looked Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic in the eye and called him a ‘damned war criminal’ has become the stuff of campaign legend.

“The Democratic vice presidential nominee brings up the 1993 confrontation on the campaign trail to whoops of delight from supporters. Senator Barack Obama mentioned it when he announced he had chosen Biden as his running mate.

“During vice presidential debate with his counterpart on the Republican ticket, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, Biden twice gave himself credit for shifting US policy on Bosnia. The senator from Delaware declared that he ‘was the catalyst to change the circumstance in Bosnia led by President Clinton.’ At another point he noted: ‘My recommendations on Bosnia — I admit I was the first one to recommend it. They saved tens of thousands of lives.’”

Instead of “saving tens of thousands of lives,” the devastating Yugoslav Wars in the nineties in the aftermath of the break-up of the former Soviet Union and then the former Yugoslavia claimed over 130,000 fatalities, created a humanitarian crisis and unleashed a flood of

millions of refugees for which nobody is to blame but the Clinton administration's militarist policy of subjugating and forcibly integrating East European states into the Western capitalist bloc.

Nevertheless, smugly oblivious to the death and destruction caused by Washington's global domination agenda, national security shill Glenn Kessler further noted in the aforementioned Washington Post article:

"Biden focused on deficiencies in US policy toward Bosnia, he called for NATO expansion before it became fashionable and most recently prodded the Bush administration to back a \$1 billion package to rebuild Georgia after the Russian invasion.

"As the incident with Milosevic shows, Biden is hardly shy about emphasizing his own role in world affairs. Biden's book portrays him frequently confronting Clinton and bucking him up on Bosnia when the president had doubts about his own policy. But the hard legislative work was left to others. Biden did take an early stab at prodding action, writing an amendment in 1992 — opposed by George H.W. Bush's administration — that authorized spending \$50 million to arm the Bosnian Muslims.

"In April 1993, Biden spent a week traveling in the Balkans, meeting with key officials, including a three-hour session with Milosevic. The trip was detailed in 15 pages of the senator's autobiography.

"By all accounts, the meeting was tense. Milosevic spent a lot of time poring over maps and expressing concerns with peace proposals crafted by a group of international mediators. Milosevic denied he had much influence over the Bosnian Serbs, but then immediately summoned Radovan Karadzic, their leader, with a curt phone call.

"According to Biden's book, Milosevic asked the senator what he thought of him. 'I think you're a damn war criminal and you should be tried as one,' Biden said he shot back. Milosevic, he said, did not react.

"Upon his return to the United States, Biden issued a 36-page report on the trip, laying out eight policy proposals, including airstrikes on Serb artillery and lifting the arms embargo on Bosnian Muslims.

"Biden continued to make fiery statements on Bosnia, demanding action. Richard C. Holbrooke recalled that when he was nominated as assistant secretary of state for Europe in late 1994, Biden 'in no uncertain terms made it clear to me that the policy on Bosnia had to change and he would make sure it did. He believed in action, and history proved him right.'

"'When you look back, Senator Biden got Bosnia right earlier than anyone. He understood that a combination of force and diplomacy would revive American leadership and avoid a disaster in Europe,' said James P. Rubin, a Biden aide at the time who later became spokesman for Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright."

Naively giving credit to former Senator and Vice President Joe Biden for his supposed "humanitarian interventionism" and for creating a catastrophe in the Balkans in the nineties, Paul Richter and Noam N. Levey, [writing for the LA Times](#) [3] in August 2008, further observed:

“Biden has frequently favored humanitarian interventions abroad and was an early and influential advocate for the US military action in the Balkans in the 1990s.

“Biden considers his most important foreign policy accomplishment to be his leadership on the Balkans in the mid-1990s. He pushed a reluctant Clinton administration first to arm Serbian Muslims and then to use U.S. air power to suppress conflict in Serbia and Kosovo.

“In his book, ‘Promises to Keep,’ Biden calls this one of his two ‘proudest moments in public life,’ along with the Violence Against Women Act that he championed.

“In 1998, he worked with McCain on a resolution to push the Clinton administration to use all available force to confront Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, a move designed to force the president to use ground troops if necessary against Serb forces in the former Yugoslavia, which was beset by fighting and ethnic cleansing.

“In addition, Biden, who claims close relationships with many foreign leaders, has demonstrated a readiness to cooperate with Senate Republicans in search of compromise — a trait that meshes with Obama’s pledge to reduce the level of partisan conflict and stalemate in Washington.

“He has called his new adversary, presumed Republican presidential nominee in the 2008 elections, Senator John McCain of Arizona, a ‘personal and close friend.’”

Biden’s belligerent militarism, however, didn’t stop in the Balkans, as the head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Biden said in 2002 that Saddam Hussein was a threat to national security and there was no option but to eliminate that threat. In October 2002, he voted in favor of the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq, approving the US invasion of Iraq.

More significantly, as chair of the committee, he assembled a series of witnesses to testify in favor of the authorization. They gave testimony grossly misrepresenting the intent, history of and status of Saddam and his Baathist government, which was an openly avowed enemy of al-Qaeda, and touting Iraq’s fictional possession of weapons of mass destruction.

Writing for The Guardian’s “Comment is Free” in February, [Mark Weisbrot contends](#) [4] that Joe Biden was at the forefront of mustering bipartisan support for the illegal Iraq War and it would come back to haunt him in the forthcoming presidential elections like the criminal complicity of Hillary Clinton in lending legitimacy to the Bush administration’s unilateral invasion of Iraq had thwarted her presidential ambitions, too, in the 2016 presidential elections.

Weisbrot observes:

“When the war was debated and then authorized by the US Congress in 2002, Democrats controlled the Senate and Biden was chair of the Senate committee on foreign relations. Biden himself had enormous influence as chair and argued strongly in favor of the 2002 resolution granting President Bush the authority to invade Iraq.

“‘I do not believe this is a rush to war,’ Biden said a few days before the vote. ‘I

believe it is a march to peace and security. I believe that failure to overwhelmingly support this resolution is likely to enhance the prospects that war will occur ...'

"But he had a power much greater than his own words. He was able to choose all 18 witnesses in the main Senate hearings on Iraq. And he mainly chose people who supported a pro-war position. They argued in favor of 'regime change as the stated US policy' and warned of 'a nuclear-armed Saddam sometime in this decade.' That Iraqis would 'welcome the United States as liberators' and that Iraq 'permits known al-Qaida members to live and move freely about in Iraq' and that 'they are being supported.'"

In conclusion, considering his hawkish record in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, supporting the Yugoslav wars during the Clinton presidency in the nineties, voting in favor of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars in the Bush tenure and being a vocal proponent of the purported "humanitarian intervention" in Libya and the proxy war in Syria as Obama's vice president, the Biden presidency would risk plunging the world into many more devastating conflicts.

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Notes

[1] Joe Biden's transition team is vetting a handful of Republicans for potential Cabinet positions

<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/10/20/biden-transition-republican-cabinet-429972>

[2] Biden Played Second Fiddle to Joe Lieberman in Bosnia Legislation:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/06/AR2008100602681.html>

[3] On foreign policy, he's willing to go his own way:

<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-aug-24-na-foreignpol24-story.html>

[4] Joe Biden championed the Iraq war. Will that come back to haunt him now?

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/17/joe-biden-role-iraq-war>

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