

The Afghan debate

The Opposition in the debate was most disappointing. Labour and the SNP concentrated on demanding the UK takes more refugees more quickly. The SNP leader was unable to answer why Scottish local authorities had not reflected his policy in their actions. Labour was unwilling to get into the detail of who else they thought should be aboard our flights back to the UK or how the hard working operation at Kabul airport could be expanded and speeded up given the pressures on the runway and processing capacity in a situation which needs to meet the needs of many countries. They were unwilling to consider the issue of our national security and the steps that need to be taken to keep us safe against the possibility that the new Afghanistan will harbour or even encourage more terrorists hostile to the USA and her allies.

The Opposition also wished to blame President Trump as well as President Biden for the disaster, and of course had no sympathy for the view that the UK government had little choice once the USA pulled out her military presence unilaterally without considering the needs and wishes of the Afghan government. The MPs who took this approach clearly had not read the Doha Agreement as they seemed to think President Biden merely implemented that. If only. That Agreement required the Taliban to enter talks with the Afghan government and other political groups to seek an agreement. It made US final withdrawal conditional on Taliban good conduct. President Trump did not rush to remove all military support following the Agreement despite the election where he would doubtless liked to have reported a full exit.

The debate needed to discuss more what military intervention can achieve, and to consider more what political and diplomatic effort has to go in to follow up military intervention. You cannot defeat an ideology by force of arms alone if at all. You need to combat the ideas behind it in the minds of the people. South Korea has become a stable and much more prosperous society after the Korean war. The success of western style policies to promote economic growth there has been welcomed by citizens. The USA has been patient and has kept a substantial military presence there for many years which has deterred North Korean excursions across the border with the south. There has been no need for the USA or the West to fight, and the world has not doubted the West's resolve.

It is no solution to the troubles of current Afghanistan for western MPs to grandstand their conscience by saying we need to allow in more refugees. Afghanistan needs her brightest and best, her educated and enterprising to give her a chance of a journey to greater prosperity and happiness. The more you encourage to come to the West, the more the millions who cannot or will not make the journey suffer. It seems that the Opposition think the UK should welcome in all the people most equipped to offer their homeland the chance of change for the better. I want to see the West use its diplomatic and economic might to tempt Afghanistan to the paths of peace and prosperity. I understand that is not an easy choice. After President Biden's bad decision to leave in a hurry we are left with needing to use diplomacy, influence and economic sanctions to try to encourage good conduct and rein in violent

excess. The West after all accepts that in the cases of several powerful authoritarian regimes who do not share our values it does not have a realistic military option that it would use in anything short of a major emergency or direct threat from the country concerned. The IMF are right to withhold cash from Afghanistan. The UK should draw up a G7 set of demands of the next Afghan government that they will need to meet to get international cash and to avoid major trade and banking sanctions.

A Taliban victory is worrying for the world.

The Biden Administration will be haunted by those sad scenes of Afghans clinging to the outside of a US plane wanting to take off from Kabul. They did so in the vain hope that they might be able to go with the passengers approved for the journey inside the aircraft. That picture tells us powerfully that many Afghans see the Taliban takeover of their country as a disaster. It reminds us that the might of the USA, visibly present in the form of a large military aircraft, was bent on getting out and leaving behind the chaos that is Afghanistan under Taliban takeover.

The USA was always the initiator and senior NATO partner in the Afghan operation. For some twenty years US and allied troops fought to evict the Taliban from the towns and villages of Afghanistan, and then helped the Afghan forces recruit, train and equip to gradually take over the tasks of policing to prevent a further insurgency. Many brave UK soldiers gave their lives or suffered bad injuries in the cause of preventing the barbarism of a Taliban regime to assist the US led mission. Good advances were made in reducing the numbers of murders and exchanges of fire, allowing girls and women education and better lives, and beginning to develop a more diverse democratic system of government. These were achievements the West could be proud of, and can explain the sacrifices made by our military personnel.

President Obama tried to bring the Taliban into a peace process to see if politics and diplomacy could take over from vigilance and fighting, without success. President Trump did get into talks with the Taliban about how they could play a role within a democratic and peace loving Afghanistan. His Agreement promised US troop withdrawal in return for security guarantees from the Taliban and the intent for the Taliban to hold talks with the Afghan government to establish an agreed ways of working with them for the future. President Biden by removing US forces too speedily without the agreement of his Afghan or NATO allies left open an opportunity for the Taliban to abandon the idea of talks and to press home the advantage to take control of the whole country instead. It turned out the Afghan forces were not ready to track and withstand Taliban armed insurgents despite all the training and military equipment the US and its allies had helped provide. If President

Biden had listened to allies he would have left more support in place to prevent such an easy capture of the state. His claim that he was following President Trump's policy is not borne out by reading the Doha Declaration or Agreement with the Taliban which made clear the Taliban had to negotiate a role with the Afghan government, not usurp it at the point of a gun.

What should happen now? The first thing is to ask President Biden to make sure he does not repeat the experience in Iraq by vacating there too soon and before the host nation is ready to run its own security without help. The second is to get President Biden to spell out what alliance structure he now wishes to establish, as he has damaged and undermined the Trump idea of relying on Saudi, Israel and the Gulf states as his main allies, bringing them together in an anti Iran coalition with peace treaties between the Arab states and Israel. As President Biden tilts a bit towards Iran, how will that work out with old Trump allies who see Iran as a threat to regional peace? Will Taliban Afghanistan now ally with Iran, strengthening the forces traditionally hostile to the West? What will President Biden do if China becomes a best friend and ally of Afghanistan and offers large sums of aid, loans and investment to gain control of important economic resources? Will the US be able to rely on bases in Pakistan if Pakistan emerges as major influence on Taliban Afghanistan and another ally of Mr Biden's nemesis? Whilst it is said that even China, Pakistan and Russia have their reservations about some Taliban stances and the way they overthrew an established government, they will all most likely exploit the damage it has done to the West and will seek to lever their links to the Taliban.

We were told the world would be a better place when a new President promised grown up foreign policies from the White House. Eight months on and the Middle East is a less stable place, the US has suffered a major military defeat without firing a shot in anger to stop the Taliban that they had evicted previously, and we await some idea of how the President thinks he can pursue diplomatic avenues to defend western interests and help support more stable and prosperous societies in the Middle East.

[Fact checking the BBC](#)

I was surprised to receive an email from the BBC after my interview on Monday of last week. It asked me to prove that German carbon dioxide emissions were twice as large as the UK's, a claim I made in my interview. I was surprised because I would expect the BBC to know the main sources of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide as practically every BBC news show and comment show has to have a climate change item on it these days. I sent him back couple of sources that a simple google search yielded. I had of course checked my recollections of the numbers before doing the interview so I knew they were correct. He expressed no interest in my allegations about China which accounts for around 27 times as much CO2 output as the UK.

He returned to the issue having consulted someone else to point out that if you looked at consumption patterns rather than at where fuel was burned and things made the UK would have a worse figure and Germany as a leading exporter of carbon dioxide drenched products would have a bit better figure by transferring some of their CO2 to the importing country. Germany would of course still be the larger emitter. I explained that I was talking about COP 26 and the global Treaty framework. The whole basis of the international conferences is to get countries to pledge to cut the CO2 that is generated on their territory, as that is more subject to their control. Surely the expression Germany's CO2 output means just that, the CO2 they produce.

He agreed that the figures used were correct but felt he needed to write an additional essay about how perhaps we should use consumption based figures instead of the agreed international output based figures. I objected to this being done in the name of a fact check on what I had said when it was obvious I had cited accurate normal figures. Nonetheless the BBC fact check then posted a long essay which did begin by quoting another source to show my figures were accurate before going into a long apology for Germany and a representation of figures to cast Germany in a better light. Why? Why does Germany have to be protected when her business model includes digging out plenty of brown coal and burning it, and producing millions of fossil fuel burning vehicles. In contrast the UK has all but phased out coal from the mix. Why no mention of Germany's rows over extending open cast coal mining, her refusal to eliminate coal this decade, and no mention of China, the world's largest carbon dioxide producer?

[Harrowing scenes from Kabul](#)

I wrote about this brewing crisis recently and have tweeted about the dangers of the unduly hasty US withdrawal. I will return to this topic with a longer piece on Wednesday morning ahead of the Parliamentary debate. I am putting out this bookmark so those of you who want to write about it have a tag to do so.

[My Interview on GB News about Brexit and Covid lockdowns](#)

Readers of this blog may be interested to see my recent interview on GB News: