

President Biden's gaffes

When President Trump was in office the U.K. media and some on this site sought to argue that most of what he said was unacceptable. Now we have President Biden making a string of dangerous gaffes in a series of worrying international conflicts these critics of the USA go quiet.

President Biden's premature, sudden and ill judged withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan was unhelpful. President Trump wanted to get the troops home but made it conditional, leaving him unable to withdraw before the election as he wished. Joe Biden did not bother about conditions and did not understand he was giving the country to the Taliban after 20 years of fighting them. He failed to consult allies. Once he had done it he threw away all the lives and treasure spent on trying to build an Afghan democracy. He also let the Presidents of China, Russia, North Korea and others think the West was weak, allowing them scope to plan power grabs of their own.

Tested in Taiwan he then misspoke in too tough a way. He invented a military guarantee of Taiwan's independence which the US has never expressly granted. His staff rushed out a reiteration of the official policy of studied ambiguity. The US might go to war over Taiwan. The President accepted the correction.

Worse was to come over Ukraine. The President before Putin had crossed the borders with troops said his response would be more modest if any Russian incursion was limited. It seemed to give a green light to Russia grabbing more of the Donbas and may have egged Putin on with his military plans.

Now we have the President saying he wants regime change in Russia. Commentators and the public can wish that but if the President says it US resources have to be deployed to achieve it. His staff moved quickly to deny it is a US policy aim.

This is all unhelpful. Relations with countries like Russia, China and North Korea need consistent firmness from the leader of the free world. There must be no doubt what the rules are or where the red lines lie.