



Leave Joe Biden Alone

Description

USA: Every administration has its ups and downs; today I examine why the Biden White House is taking more than its fair share of hits. But first, here are three great new stories from *The Atlantic*.

A steady hand

Any evaluation of a president's performance usually begins with a soul-baring about whether the writer voted for or against the incumbent. I voted for Joe Biden, and I like him.

I am not, however, a partisan Democrat, and I was never a member of the Democratic Party. (My parents were typical Depression-era, blue-collar Democrats turned post-1968 Republicans.) In college, I became a New England moderate-conservative Republican, but I worked for a centrist Democrat on Beacon Hill and for a moderate Republican, the late John Heinz, in the Senate. And so I always kind of liked Biden as someone to whom I could relate: a working-class centrist who spoke his mind, even when his thoughts were garbled or when he seemed comically full of himself.

The Joe Biden who ran in 2020 appeared wiser, sadder, somewhat deflated, and seemed to be taking on the presidency as a public service and a burden. Time and tragedy had tempered Biden, and I liked him even more than I did in his flashier, [Jason Sudeikis-like](#) youth. These days, I think he's done a pretty good job, especially given the fact that he's dealing with a pandemic, revelations about an attempted American coup d'état, and an economic slowdown over which he had no control.

Oh, and by the way: He's also managed (so far) to head off World War III and a possible nuclear conflict. We seem to forget that this is Job One for every American president, but while we're griping about the gas prices (over which Biden also has no control), the Russians are replaying the Eastern Front against 40 million Ukrainians and also threatening NATO. It's been reassuring to have a steady hand in charge of our foreign policy.

So why can't the president catch a break? The public blames him for almost everything, and his

approval ratings are cratering. What's going on here?

Forget about the Republicans; controlled by their wackiest members (I would say "the fringe," but they are now "the base"), they have fallen into a vortex of nihilism and desperation. They're almost a lock to win the House in 2022, but they're not sure why they want it, other than to protect themselves both from having to live among their own constituents and the slow but steady approach of justice for GOP involvement in January 6.

As *USA Today* columnist Jill Lawrence pointed out this morning, the Republicans are determined to impeach Biden because they have no other play—even if it's not what voters want. It's what enough of *their* voters want, and it will make sufficient noise to cover their lack of a plan to govern the country.

One might have hoped, however—and by *one*, I mean "me"—that the Democrats would hold their fire and stop their whispering about what happens if Biden steps down, or even dies. And if Biden does hold on—well, there are some prominent young Democrats who haven't decided if they're going to support him. (And by *young Democrats*, I mean "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.")

My suspicion is that the full weight of our foreign and domestic crises has not broken through the self-absorption and solipsism of not only our political parties but the American public. We are just not capable of understanding that at home, we are inches away from the meltdown of our constitutional system of government, and abroad, we are one errant cruise missile away from a nuclear crisis.

But this is all the president's fault because Joe Biden is old and talks like ... well, like Joe Biden.

This is part of a more general problem in American politics: We have come to regard the presidency as a temporary appointment to Superman, and the White House as a gleaming Fortress of Solitude full of potential miracles. In doing so, we let ourselves off the hook for any responsibility either for our own actions as voters, or for any requirement to face our problems together with resilience and understanding.

By Tom Nichols

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