

## *Liberals are getting impatient with Biden's foreign policy decisions.*



By Michael Crowley

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Two months into the new administration, President Biden's base is expressing frustration with his approach to foreign policy issues.

Although Mr. Biden delighted liberals with several swift actions — including rejoining the Paris climate accord and withdrawing support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen — he prompted frustration by ordering an airstrike in Syria and declining to punish the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, for the brutal murder of a dissident journalist and American resident, Jamal Khashoggi.

On Wednesday, Mr. Biden fueled the discontent when he conceded in an interview with ABC News that it would be “tough” to meet a May 1 deadline, set under former President Donald J. Trump, to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, a high priority for liberals impatient to end what they call “endless” American wars.

And more conflict may lie ahead on military spending, with Mr. Biden expected to propose few if any cuts to a Pentagon budget that swelled under Mr. Trump. Fifty House Democrats sent the White House a letter this week calling for a “significant” reduction.

After seeing Mr. Biden deliver a transformational \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill, progressives are asking why his foreign policy feels so conventional. They worry that Mr. Biden and his largely centrist team of national security officials will disappoint the liberal wing's desires for a new foreign policy that relies far less on military power, de-escalates tensions with rivals like Iran and China, and places greater pressure on allies like Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Biden administration officials called the criticism unfair and premature.

One senior administration official said that the Trump era had created an unrealistic appetite for finger-snap action on complex issues, and that the longer arc of Mr. Biden's policies would satisfy many frustrated liberals. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss unofficial political considerations.

The official pointed to several early actions by Mr. Biden welcomed by the left, including his returning to the climate deal, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Human Rights Council. Mr. Biden has also reversed visa restrictions widely known as Mr. Trump's “Muslim ban,” and placed temporary limits on drone strikes outside of combat zones.

Earlier this week, the administration was praised by an unexpected source: Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and adviser on Middle East issues.

In an opinion essay for The Wall Street Journal, Mr. Kushner said Mr. Biden "did the right thing" and "called Iran's bluff" by refusing to make new concessions to lure Tehran into talks about restoring a nuclear deal abandoned by the Trump administration.

"I would take this in the Biden White House as a giant, blinking red light that maybe what I'm doing is not right because Jared Kushner is finding ways to praise it," Benjamin J. Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser under President Barack Obama who worked on the 2015 nuclear agreement, said Wednesday on the "Pod Save the World" podcast.

Michael Crowley is a diplomatic correspondent in the Washington bureau. He joined The Times in 2019 and was a White House correspondent for the last 18 months of the Trump administration. @michaelcrowley