

## ***U.K. Parliament grills Boris Johnson over Afghanistan and has harsh words for Biden, too.***



By Mark Landler

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Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain came under a cascade of angry questions in Parliament on Wednesday over his government's lack of preparation for the chaotic collapse of Afghanistan and for Britain's inability to help stabilize the country after the U.S. withdrawal.

Mr. Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May, condemned him for failing to put together an "alternative alliance" with other NATO members to avert a Taliban takeover. She said that failure had embarrassed Britain and undermined its ambitions to carve out an international role in the post-Brexit world.

"We boast about Global Britain," Mrs. May said, "but where is Global Britain on the streets of Kabul?"

A defensive Mr. Johnson rejected charges that his government had been caught flat-footed by the sudden upheaval. But he said it was an illusion to suggest that Britain or other NATO members could have prevented the collapse of the Afghan government without support from the U.S. military.

"I do not believe deploying tens of thousands of British troops to fight the Taliban is an option that would commend itself to the British people or this house," Mr. Johnson said during the charged debate in the House of Commons.

The prime minister acknowledged that "the collapse has been faster than even the Taliban themselves predicted." But he added, "What is not true is to say the U.K. government was unprepared or did not foresee this."

He promised that Britain would accept up to 5,000 refugees from Afghanistan this year, giving priority to women and girls at risk of persecution by the Taliban. The long-term target is up to 20,000 Afghan immigrants — a number that opposition leaders said was inadequate to the humanitarian threat unfolding there.

Keir Starmer, the leader of the opposition Labour Party, accused Mr. Johnson of "appalling complacency," noting that the prime minister and the foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, had been on vacation when the Taliban began their final advance on Kabul. Mr. Raab returned from a resort in Crete early Monday, after the capital had fallen.

"You cannot coordinate an international response from the beach," Mr. Starmer said as Mr. Raab angrily shook his head.

But lawmakers saved some of their sharpest barbs for President Biden. They said he had engineered the U.S. withdrawal without bothering to consult Britain and then blamed it on the Afghan Army for being unwilling to fight.

Tom Tugendhat, a British Army veteran who served in Afghanistan, said it was shameful of Mr. Biden to impugn the courage of Afghan fighters. He recalled the pride he had felt after being decorated by the 82nd Airborne Division following the capture of a strategically important Afghan town in a British-led battle in Helmand Province.

"To see their commander in chief call into question the courage of men I fought with, to claim they ran," said Mr. Tugendhat, a Conservative who is chairman of the foreign affairs committee. "It's shameful."

"Those who have never fought for the colors they fly should be careful about criticizing those who have," he added.