

If you don't regularly receive my reports, request a free subscription at [steve\\_bakke@comcast.net](mailto:steve_bakke@comcast.net) !  
Visit my website at <http://www.myslantonthings.com> !

## **The Biden Doctrine: Muddling Through\*\*\***

By Steve Bakke  February 9, 2022



The concept of “presidential doctrines” has been around a long time, but I recall it being routinely used only since the beginning of the “Bush 43” presidency. The term usually refers to foreign policy and national security. Following are unofficial “Doctrines” from recent presidencies.

Charles Krauthammer was the first to endow “doctrine status” on President Bush 43. The Bush Doctrine clearly was a reaction to “9/11.” Bush declared that successfully anticipating threats is essential after which we will act proactively, preemptively, and if necessary, unilaterally in the international security interest of the United States.

Here’s the official policy as stated in the National Security Strategy – it required: “defending the United States, the American people and our interests at home and abroad by identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders.” Sending our military into Iraq demonstrated this new attitude toward terrorism.

President Obama expressed his preference for avoiding “doctrinaire” approaches to foreign policy and national security. He preferred viewing “our security in terms of a common security and a common prosperity with other peoples and other countries.” His was a very international perspective, with a tendency for restrained and multilateral actions.

The term “lead from behind” crept into Obama’s doctrine after an Obama official used the phrase to describe our Libyan policy. Many conservative critics considered it idealistic and naïve to always favor appeasement over preemptive action. Some saw this sense of reluctance to be a sign of uncertainty and indecision. Obama supporters saw this as being prudently cautious while avoiding military confrontation at all costs?

A spontaneous comment by Obama during his second term reduced his nuanced foreign policy attitude to just a few words. He was on Air Force One, discussing his approach to foreign policy when he summarized his attitude as: “Don’t do stupid sh\*\*!”

Donald Trump's four action-packed, battle-scarred years reflect the man and his combative, often outrageous, style. Rather than relying on theoretical discussions, he preferred personal instincts and experience regarding human nature, behavior, and motivation.

Trump had strong win/lose instincts. Despite that, he was reluctant to get bogged down in extended military engagements. His doctrine probably would include a list of actions: improved border security, illegal immigration, and cross-border drug and human trafficking; energy independence; law and order emphasis; strengthened military; renegotiated trade agreements; potentially transformative Abraham Accords; record low unemployment with healthy wage increases; terminated Paris Accords and the Iran Nuclear Agreement; aggressively engaged China, North Korea and Russia; and substantially wiped-out ISIS.

"America first" and "peace through strength" come close to expressing the Trump Doctrine in just a few words.

***(Note: Trump's outrageous and combative personality impacted his presidency. However, that discussion, along with his post-presidency election integrity activities, the mainstream media's war against him, the fraudulent Steele Dossier, and the foolish impeachment trial belong in a separate commentary.)***

Biden's foreign policies seem significantly joined with Obama's. Part of this impression comes from the fact that several of Obama's international and national security policies that Trump changed, have been, or will be reversed by Biden. These include: Trump's progress with border security; Trump's policies for immigration and drug trafficking; Paris Climate Accords; oil production and pipeline policies; and Trump's cancellation of the Iran nuclear agreement.

The stumbling associated with Biden's China and Russia relationships, chaos at the border, the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, and our voluntary movement away from energy independence stand out for me as the most negative developments from Biden's foreign and national security policies.

Some words I used 10 years ago to describe Obama's policies also apply to the direction Biden is taking. Biden's policies seem to "rely on the opposition doing the right thing for the right reasons." That's very "reactive," not "proactive." It seems naïve to think that approach is possible in today's world. It's opposite in virtually all ways compared with the Bush Doctrine and the Trump Doctrine. But it is consistent with both Obama's and Biden's reluctant, "wait-and-see" attitude.

\*\*\* Finally, I heard a characterization of Biden's Doctrine during a podcast discussion between Zack Cooper, Melanie Marlowe, and Christopher Preble at warontherocks.com. These well-regarded international relations analysts preferred the following statement for describing the Biden Doctrine: "Muddling Through." Let's go with that!