

From [Democracy Now](#) | Original Article

As President Joe Biden nears his 100th day in the White House, we look at his foreign policy record, both as president and over the past five decades. A new project created by Jeremy Scahill, award-winning journalist and senior correspondent at The Intercept, examines Biden's stances on war, militarism and the CIA going back to the early 1970s, when he was first elected as a senator in Delaware. We air a video discussing the project, titled "Empire Politician," featuring Scahill.

**AMY GOODMAN:** President Biden is addressing a joint session of Congress tonight for the first time. It comes on the eve of his 100th day in the White House. Biden is expected to unveil his \$1.8 trillion American Families Plan to expand educational opportunities, child care and paid family leave. He's proposing to fund the plan in part by raising the capital gains tax for the nation's wealthiest households and cracking down on wealthy dodgers.

While much of tonight's speech is expected to focus on domestic issues, we spend the hour today looking at Biden's foreign policy record, both as president and over the past half-century.

*The Intercept*

has just launched a sweeping

[project](#)

examining a half-century of Biden's stances on war, militarism and the CIA

, going back to the early '70s, when Biden was first elected senator of Delaware. The project is called "Empire Politician." It was created by the award-winning journalist Jeremy Scahill, senior correspondent and editor-at-large at

*The Intercept*

, which he helped found. Later in the show, Jeremy will join us, but first we turn to a new video featuring Jeremy Scahill, produced by

*The Intercept*

.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** We have never had a president with a longer paper trail than Joe Biden. He's taken so many different positions on the same issues so many times throughout his career that I sometimes wonder if Biden even knows anymore what he actually thinks about a

particular issue. Joe Biden might tell you one thing one day and really believe it, and then the next day he’s doing the exact opposite because he’s cut some side deal that maybe we’ll hear about in some years.

Above all, Biden is an empire politician. He is someone who believes that questions of war don’t really matter on a moral level, but how does it impact America’s credibility, security and prestige.

**BOB CLARK:** The youngest new face in the U.S. Senate next year will be that of Democrat Joseph Biden of Delaware.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** When Joe Biden began his run for the U.S. Senate, Richard Nixon was running a lawless administration.

**PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON:** We must never allow America to become the second-strongest nation in the world.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** The CIA is conducting operations inside of the United States. There’s secret components to the War in Vietnam. And early on in his Senate career, Biden ends up on a subcommittee that is examining the issue of American war power: Who has the right to send the American people into a war? And he becomes an original co-sponsor of one of the most important laws passed by the United States Congress on questions of war.

**NEWS ANCHOR:** The War Powers Act grew out of the agony of the Vietnam War. Based on its constitutional authority, Congress passed a joint resolution which obliged the president to get congressional approval.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Also, Biden becomes a very early and ardent critic of the CIA for the perception that the White House and the CIA are regularly circumventing the U.S. Congress. And then, on the other side of it, Biden becomes a totally radical warrior against leaking and against whistleblowers.

Jimmy Carter nominates an outsider to be director of the CIA, Ted Sorensen, a friend of the Kennedy family and adviser to  
K JF  
Carter had said he was going to rein in the CIA  
, shrink it, reduce its budget. But then Biden discovers, oh, Ted Sorensen actually wrote an affidavit in support of Daniel Ellsberg when the Pentagon Papers prosecution was happening and Ellsberg was facing a century in prison under the Espionage Act. And in that affidavit, Ted Sorensen says everybody in Washington takes classified documents home, and they regularly leak far more sensitive documents to the press than the Pentagon Papers. Ted Sorensen's nomination was dead in the water after Biden joined the Republicans. Biden was more obsessed with some random admission from a Washington insider that they had taken classified documents home than he was about actually reining in the CIA  
.

**REPORTER:** Republican audiences love what he has to say.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Reagan and Bush take power in Washington. Biden understands exactly what they want to do. They want to undo all of the oversight mechanisms that were put in place post-Nixon. So Biden becomes the leading opponent of Reagan's nominee to be CIA director, William Casey. But then, as Biden sort of gets to know people — and, you know, he's big on personal relationships — he starts to back away from his own supposedly bedrock positions. So he opposes William Casey's nomination but ultimately then votes for William Casey.

So, throughout Casey’s tenure, which spanned both of Reagan’s terms, you see Biden, on the one hand, blasting Casey in public, and then, privately, literally collaborating to sell covert options as in American national interest — in some cases, to sell wars that were being done without the very laws being followed that Joe Biden co-sponsored. He had supported the invasion of Grenada in 1983. He supported airstrikes that were intended to kill Muammar Gaddafi in 1986. In Nicaragua, the Reagan administration begins financing and arming the Contra death squads, and this would ultimately lead to the Iran-Contra scandal. Biden publicly is railing against the funding of the Contras, but then does what I think can just be called a Biden.

**SEN. JOE BIDEN:** Joe Biden. How are you?

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** So, Biden starts to try to broker deals. “Well, we can support the Contras, Mr. Reagan, if we put this restriction on it and that restriction on it.”

**SEN. JOE BIDEN:** I think I’m looking forward to helping you on this one, too.

**PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN:** Well, bless your heart.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** He would say, “Oh, well, that’s because I’m a great compromiser.” You don’t compromise with death squads. And, you know, Joe Biden, very, very early on in the Iran-Contra scandal, came out and said, basically, that Reagan probably should resign. Reagan gives this now-infamous speech in which he says that “At the time, I made these statements saying that we didn’t transfer any arms for hostages.”

**PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN:** My heart and my best intentions still tell me that’s true. But the facts and the evidence tell me it is not.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Reagan gives this sort of logical gymnastics speech. Who does it resonate with? It resonates with Joe Biden.

**SEN. JOE BIDEN:** I take the president at his word that he did not know. I accept him at his word.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** So, in 1990, 1991, it becomes clear that the United States is going to go to war against Iraq. Joe Biden starts raising holy hell in the U.S. Senate about the War Powers Resolution. Biden gets so furious during this battle with the White House and Bush’s utter disdain for congressional war powers that he takes a principled stand and actually votes against the authorization. And Biden actually lives to regret that he didn’t vote in favor of that war, because it ended up being very popular and was helping to sort of boost the American morale in the post-Vietnam era.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH:** Aggression is defeated. The war is over.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Biden then, almost overnight, transforms into one of the most hawkish figures on Iraq policy in United States Congress. He becomes a leading voice calling for the overthrow of the Iraqi regime.

**SEN. JOE BIDEN:** And it’s going to require guys like you in uniform to be back on foot in the desert taking the son of a — the — taking Saddam down.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** And so, what you see is Biden emerging from the 1990s as an empire guy. Now, in the case of the war in the former Yugoslavia, Biden was a very early advocate of

the U.S. intervening militarily. Biden was among the first to call it a genocide in Bosnia. But at the same time, Biden also sort of rejected notions that this is just a humanitarian cause. Biden would talk about it throughout the '90s as defending American prestige.

**SEN. JOE BIDEN:** We should go to Belgrade, and we should have a Japanese-, German-style occupation of that country.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** As Biden is agitating for the United States to be militarily involved in the former Yugoslavia, Haitians in the United States are watching as a brutal junta, death squads, overthrow the democratically elected government of the leftist President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. And Biden gives an interview on *Charlie Rose* in which he basically says nobody cares about Haiti.

**SEN. JOE BIDEN:** If Haiti just quietly sunk into the Caribbean or rose up 300 feet, it wouldn't matter a whole lot in terms of our interest.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** He viewed the stakes in Europe as something that the U.S. could gain by getting involved. In the case of Haiti, it would have been purely humanitarian in nature.

And then the Clinton administration, immersed in the Monica Lewinsky scandal, suddenly starts a series of wars and military actions. So Biden supports all of them. He supports the bombing of a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan. He supports bombing some farm in Afghanistan where maybe Osama bin Laden had been recently.

And when the FBI director comes to testify in front of Congress, Joe Biden is one of the senators who starts saying, “Can you clarify for me: What’s the legality of assassination?” Biden seems to get this — the problem with the idea that America can kill whomever it wants, wherever it wants, however it wants.

Then the 9/11 attacks happen. And the simplest way to put it is that Joe Biden just supports almost everything that the Bush administration wants in the immediate aftermath. Biden not only votes in favor of the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq, he plays a key role in facilitating a war based on lies.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH:** No matter how long it takes.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** Now as president, Joe Biden is saying he’s going to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan.

**PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN:** I’ve concluded that it’s time to end America’s longest war.

**JEREMY SCAHILL:** This doesn’t mean that the war is going to completely end. When Biden was vice president, Biden wanted to use the very forces that actually are at the tip of the spear of assassination operations, instead of the large-scale troop deployment. What he’s doing is finally getting the war waged the way he wanted it, which is the CIA, Special Operations Forces, that are going to hunt down and kill the people that he determines are the enemy.

If Biden had become president, you know, 20 years ago, I think that it would have been easier to predict some of his future actions or policy behavior. But because of his age, because of the political moment that we’re in, I think there are some real wildcards in how Biden is going to approach the world, including on questions of war.

**AMY GOODMAN:** That was a new video produced by *Intercept*, featuring Jeremy Scahill talking about his sweeping new investigative

[project](#)

, “Empire Politician,” about Joe Biden’s foreign policy record over the past half-century.