

Testimony Before the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability

Hearing: "A Legacy of Incompetence: Consequences of the Biden-Harris Administration's Policy Failures"

Meaghan Mobbs
Director, Center for American Safety and Security
Independent Women's Forum
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Chairman Grothman, Ranking Member Raskin, and members of the committee, thank you for your leadership in convening a hearing to discuss the policy implications of the last four years. As the Committee responsible for the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of the federal government, the American people deserve and expect a functioning checks and balances system.

The core duty of any government is to protect its people. Yet, over the last four years, the world has only grown more dangerous. Under the current administration, we have witnessed the largest attack on a European nation in 85 years¹ and the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.² History has been made by the number of full and partial U.S. Embassy evacuations around the world.³ The United Nations concurs that "the world is facing the highest number of conflicts since World War II."⁴

¹ Global Memo. "The Invasion That Shook the World." *Council of Foreign Relations*, February 24, 2023.

<https://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global-memos/invasion-shook-world#:~:text=Global%20Memos%20are%20briefs%20by,experts%20on%20major%20international%20developments.&text=It%20has%20been%20one%20year,Europe%20since%20World%20War%20II.>

² Matthew Lee and Aamer Madhani. "Blinken to visit Israel and Jordan as US seeks to prevent war from spreading." *Associated Press*, October 12, 2023.

[https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-us-biden-blinken-99eb4063edabc80fa1fa198fb0bb020e.](https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-us-biden-blinken-99eb4063edabc80fa1fa198fb0bb020e)

³ Tony Kinnett. "Biden Sets Record for Most Embassy Evacuations." *The Daily Signal*, March 18, 2024. [https://www.dailysignal.com/2024/03/18/biden-sets-record-for-most-embassy-evacuations/.](https://www.dailysignal.com/2024/03/18/biden-sets-record-for-most-embassy-evacuations/)

⁴ United Nations. "Women and Girls Are Disproportionately Affected by Conflict-Related Sexual Violence." *United Nations Regional Information Centre*, April 14, 2022. [https://unric.org/en/women-and-girls-are-disproportionately-affected-by-conflict-related-sexual-violence/.](https://unric.org/en/women-and-girls-are-disproportionately-affected-by-conflict-related-sexual-violence/)

It's crucial to understand that these conditions weren't simply imposed on us. Instead, reckless policies of appeasement emboldened our enemies, giving them the power and confidence to act. Unfortunately, this failed diplomatic strategy, which involves making concessions to aggressive powers to avoid potential conflict, has, in fact, led to more conflict. As a result, we now face the urgent task of re-establishing deterrence.

Effective deterrence rests on two essential pillars: the ability to inflict significant harm on adversaries and the absolute certainty that this power will be deployed when necessary. At its core, deterrence is grounded in fear—the fear that any challenge to American interests will be met with swift and decisive force. Under the current administration, this fear has significantly diminished. Our enemies no longer view the United States as a nation ready to act with strength and resolve when confronted. Instead, they witnessed an administration more focused on diplomatic gestures and conciliatory measures, often at the expense of American security.

This erosion of credibility has dangerous consequences. When the world's most powerful democracy projects indecision, it invites aggression. Rogue states and hostile actors have sensed a window of opportunity to expand their influence and challenge the global order. The vacuum left by this administration's reluctance to wield American power was quickly filled by state and non-state actors with ambitions that directly threaten U.S. interests and global stability.

History teaches us that the price of appeasement is never paid in words or negotiations; it is paid in human lives. By failing to act with strength, the Biden-Harris administration has not only weakened America's deterrent posture but also put the nation and its allies at greater risk. The cost of such inaction can be counted in the bloodshed that follows when hostile forces, unafraid of retribution, move unchecked.

The Russian Invasion of Ukraine

The clearest example of such overt aggression by a state actor can be found in Russia's invasion of Ukraine. A war that has entered its third year was presaged by a lengthy series of policy decisions by the administration that strengthened Vladimir Putin's position and demonstrated a provocative unwillingness to defend Ukraine. The end result of these policy choices was Putin's belief that the U.S. response to an

invasion would be “high on outrage but limited in actual punishment,” leading to the greatest deterrence failure since the end of the Cold War.⁵

Once the invasion occurred, the administration continuously slow-rolled critical military aid.⁶ Had the administration rapidly delivered the much-needed military systems Ukraine urgently requested, the U.S. could have dramatically increased Ukraine's chances of securing a decisive battlefield victory—saving countless lives and potentially ending the war. Instead, the Biden-Harris administration's chronic delays projected weakness, dragged out the conflict, and escalated the economic burden borne by both the United States and its allies.

Worse, the same military architects of the catastrophic Afghanistan withdrawal were responsible for advising and assisting Ukraine in their failed counteroffensive in 2023. Reports showed that U.S. and Ukrainian officials “sharply disagreed at times over strategy, tactics, and timing.”⁷ The U.S. intelligence community also disagreed with the Department of Defense's optimistic assessment. Crucially, promised equipment necessary for penetrating Russian defensive lines was either not delivered or when arrived was found to be non-mission capable. One Ukrainian official estimated that only 15 percent of items needed to execute the plan, developed in partnership with the U.S., arrived.⁸ Not a single official across any agency was held accountable for these failures.

More broadly, only slightly more than half of the heavy weapons committed have been delivered.⁹ This is unsurprising when as far back as 2015, a report entitled “Lying to Ourselves: Dishonest in the Army Profession,” found widespread patterns of lying

⁵ Shane Harris, Karen DeYoung, Isabelle Khurshudyan, Ashley Parker and Liz Sly. “Road to War: U.S. Struggled to Convince Allies, and Zelensky, of Risk of Invasion.” *The Washington Post*, December 22, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/ukraine-road-to-war/>.

⁶ Elliot Ackerman. “Why the Biden Administration is Betting Big on Ukraine's Counteroffensive.” *Time*, May 15, 2023. <https://time.com/6548816/ukraine-biden-administration-military-aid/>.

⁷ Washington Post Staff. “Ukraine's Allies Plan for Long War as Hopes for Counteroffensive Dim.” *The Washington Post*, December 4, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/04/ukraine-counteroffensive-us-planning-russia-war/>.

⁸ Washington Post Staff. “Ukraine's Allies Plan for Long War as Hopes for Counteroffensive Dim.” *The Washington Post*, December 4, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/04/ukraine-counteroffensive-us-planning-russia-war/>.

⁹ Kiel Institute for the World Economy. “Ukraine Support Tracker: Despite Military Offensive, New Pledges of Support Remain Low.” *Kiel Institute for the World Economy*, September 6, 2023. <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/publications/news/ukraine-support-tracker-despite-military-offensive-new-pledges-of-support-remain-low/>.

in the military to include falsifying records and incomplete inventories.¹⁰ More recently, in March 2022, the military equipment in Army Prepositioned Stock-2 issued for a U.S. military exercise in Germany was found not fully mission capable.¹¹ This invites very salient questions about our own material readiness.

Regarding weapons that have been delivered, problems with maintenance persist as the Ukrainians struggle to manage a hodgepodge of systems. For example, there are currently twelve different 155mm systems from numerous countries on the combat line.¹² In the U.S. Army, there is an entire military occupational specialty (MOS) solely dedicated to maintaining self-propelled artillery. It takes 14 weeks of training following basic training to learn just our systems.

Such glaring gaps between reality and the administration's rosy rhetoric are why Biden's months-long delay in delivering his Ukraine strategy to Congress is unacceptable.¹³ By law, it should have also included an unclassified version to ensure transparency for the American people. It didn't. What is clear is that a robust and adaptive strategy that empowers Ukraine to fight effectively in the short term is desperately needed and long overdue.

The Chaotic Withdrawal From Afghanistan

It's no surprise that the failed execution of another key policy—the withdrawal from Afghanistan—was overseen by the same team currently struggling to protect U.S. interests in Ukraine. U.S. intelligence assessed the fall of Afghanistan played a major role in influencing Putin's decision to invade Ukraine. Putin reportedly believed Biden, "humbled by the humiliating Afghanistan withdrawal," was eager to avoid getting involved in new conflicts.¹⁴

¹⁰ Leonard Wong and Stephan J. Gerras. "Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession." *United States Army War College Press*, February 2015. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA615274.pdf>.

¹¹ Department of Defense Inspector General. "Evaluation of Army Pre-Positioned Equipment Issued in Response to Ukraine and the NATO Defense Force." *Inspector General U.S. Department of Defense*, February 27, 2023. https://media.defense.gov/2023/Mar/27/2003187349/-1/-1/DODIG-2023-053_REDACTED.PDF.

¹² Sam Skove. "Army's Future Artillery May Include Wheeled Howitzers, Automated Cannons, and Long-Range Mortars." *Defense One*, May 8, 2024. <https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2024/05/armys-future-artillery-may-include-wheeled-howitzers-automated-cannons-and-long-range-mortars/396641/>.

¹³ Patricia Zengerle. "Biden Administration Sends Congress Long-Awaited Ukraine Strategy Report: Sources." *Reuters*, September 9, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/biden-administration-sends-congress-long-awaited-ukraine-strategy-report-sources-2024-09-09/>.

¹⁴ Shane Harris, Karen DeYoung, Isabelle Khurshudyan, Ashley Parker and Liz Sly. "Road to War: U.S. Struggled to Convince Allies, and Zelensky, of Risk of Invasion." *The Washington Post*, December 21, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/ukraine-road-to-war/>.

The failures in Afghanistan span multiple administrations and all are complicit, to some degree, in the colossal disaster that was our nation's longest war. Since September 11, 2001, the United States has spent over \$2 trillion on the war in Afghanistan. That breaks down to \$300 million every day for two decades. This staggering sum included \$800 billion for direct combat operations and \$85 billion to train the Afghan army. U.S. taxpayers also funded \$750 million a year in payroll for Afghan soldiers.¹⁵ This same army rapidly collapsed soon after the Pentagon abruptly shut down Bagram Air Force Base in early July which cut off air support as the Taliban advanced.¹⁶ In total, Brown University's Costs of War Project estimates the U.S. spent \$2.26 trillion on a war we lost.¹⁷

I was a vocal advocate for withdrawing, I am a critic of how it occurred.

It is clear the withdrawal was marked by systemic failures across multiple U.S. government agencies, with key decision-makers neglecting critical warnings and evading accountability.¹⁸

The National Security Council (NSC), led by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, played a central role in the withdrawal failure by prioritizing political timelines over on-the-ground realities.¹⁹ Despite warnings from military and intelligence officials about the impending collapse of the Afghan government, the NSC pressed ahead without proper planning and controlled public messaging to downplay the situation.

¹⁵ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. "DOD'S Salary Payments to the Afghan Ministry of Defense: DOD Did Not Use APPS as Intended and Internal Control Weaknesses Raise Questions About the Accuracy of \$232 Million in Salary Payments." *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction*, July 2022. <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-22-34-AR.pdf>.

¹⁶ Defense Comptroller. "Estimated Cost to Each U.S. Taxpayer of Each of the Wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria." FY17 NDAA, March 2021. https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/documents/Section1090Reports/Estimated_Cost_to_Each_U.S._Taxpayer_of_Each_of_the_Wars_in_Afghanistan_Iraq_and_Syria_dated_March_2021.pdf.

¹⁷ Watson Institute Costs of War Project. "Estimate of U.S. Post-9/11 Spending in \$ Billions FY2001-2022." *Costs of War*, page updated September 2024. <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/economic/budget>.

¹⁸ Majority Report - House Foreign Affairs Committee. "Willful Blindness: An Assessment of the Biden-Harris' Administration's Withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Chaos that Followed." *House Foreign Affairs Committee*, September 9, 2024. <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/WILLFULL-BLINDNESS-An-Assessment-of-the-Biden-Harris%20Administrations-Withdrawal-from-Afghanistan-and-the-Chaos-that-Followed.pdf>.

¹⁹ Majority Report - House Foreign Affairs Committee. "Willful Blindness: An Assessment of the Biden-Harris' Administration's Withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Chaos that Followed." *House Foreign Affairs Committee*, September 9, 2024. <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/WILLFULL-BLINDNESS-An-Assessment-of-the-Biden-Harris%20Administrations-Withdrawal-from-Afghanistan-and-the-Chaos-that-Followed.pdf>.

This led to significant operational gaps, yet no accountability has been imposed on the NSC's leadership.

The State Department similarly delayed critical evacuation efforts. Ambassador Ross Wilson and other senior officials resisted early calls for a Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO), believing it would signal failure.²⁰ This refusal to act, even as the Taliban closed in on Kabul, resulted in a chaotic evacuation. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, despite being central to these decisions, has not accepted responsibility, and no significant action has been taken against the department's leadership for their mismanagement.

At the Department of Defense (DoD), operational mistakes such as the closure of Bagram Air Base severely hindered the U.S.'s ability to conduct a secure evacuation.²¹ Despite credible intelligence warning of a terrorist threat, the DoD failed to prevent the deadly bombing at Abbey Gate, which claimed the lives of 13 U.S. service members. Yet, no leaders within the DoD have faced consequences for these failures.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) provided clear warnings about the likely collapse of Afghan forces after U.S. troops withdrew. However, these intelligence assessments were largely ignored by policymakers, who did not adjust the withdrawal strategy accordingly. As a result, the U.S. left behind \$7 billion worth of military equipment,²² some of which was recently used in a celebratory parade by the Taliban.²³

Taken all together, the withdrawal from Afghanistan revealed widespread government dysfunction and failure to act on critical intelligence. To this day, key figures across the White House, NSC, State Department, DoD, and CIA avoid responsibility for the disastrous consequences of the withdrawal, and systemic accountability has been notably absent across all levels.

²⁰ Rebecca Beitsch. "GOP releases critical report of Biden withdrawal from Afghanistan." *The Hill*, March 8, 2024.

<https://thehill.com/homenews/house/4868649-gop-report-afghanistan-withdrawal/>.

²¹ Lara Seligman. "'Speed equals safety': Inside the Pentagon's controversial decision to leave Bagram early." *Politico*, September 28, 2021.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2021/09/28/pentagon-decision-leave-bagram-514456>.

²² Ellie Kaufman. "First on CNN: US left behind \$7 billion of military equipment in Afghanistan after 2021 withdrawal, Pentagon report says." *CNN*, April 28, 2022.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/27/politics/afghan-weapons-left-behind/index.html>.

²³ Riazat Butt. "The Taliban are celebrating 3 years in power, but they're not talking about Afghans." *Associated Press*, August 14, 2024.

<https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-taliban-three-years-anniversary-68f5bc4a3cdd9d07dcecd5d6d391df5c>.

Adding to this debacle, a January report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) cited an August 2023 World Bank report, noting that since August 2021, the UN has purchased, transported, and transferred \$2.9 billion in U.S. currency to Afghanistan.²⁴ Of this total, \$1.8 billion was provided in 2022, and \$1.1 billion was transferred by August 2023. The report also highlighted that the U.S. remains Afghanistan's largest international donor, contributing approximately \$2.6 billion to the UN, other international organizations (PIOs), and NGOs working in the country since August 2021. In short, the U.S. is still sending money to the Taliban.

Iran

Again, it is unsurprising that one of the chief architects of the withdrawal failure also touted “the Middle East region is quieter today than it has been in two decades,” only eight days before the multifront attack launched by Iranian-supported Hamas.²⁵ National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, like his boss, “has been wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue.”²⁶

The administration’s efforts to revive the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or Iran nuclear deal, was disastrous. Once again the shift from a maximum-pressure campaign under President Trump to a conciliatory, appeasement-based strategy has shown to be catastrophic. Iran is now closer to nuclear capability than it was under the original deal.²⁷ In fact, most of Iran’s nuclear expansion occurred after President Biden’s election.²⁸

²⁴ SIGAR 24-12 Evaluation Report. “Cash Shipments to Afghanistan: The UN Has Purchased and Transported More than \$2.9 Billion to Afghanistan to Implement Humanitarian Assistance.” *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction*, January 2024.
<https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-24-12-IP.pdf>.

²⁵ Gal Beckerman. “The Middle East Region is Quieter Today Than It Has Been In Two Decades.” *The Atlantic*, October 13, 2023.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2023/10/israel-war-middle-east-jake-sullivan/675580/>.

²⁶ Philip Bump. “Robert Gates Thinks Joe Biden Hasn’t Stopped Being Wrong for 40 Years.” *The Atlantic*, January 7, 2014.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/01/robert-gates-thinks-joe-biden-hasnt-stopped-being-wrong-40-years/356785/>.

²⁷ Richard Goldberg. “A Dangerous Strategy: Examining the Biden Administration’s Failures on Iran.” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, September 13, 2023.
<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/09/13/a-dangerous-strategy-examining-the-biden-administrations-failures-on-iran/>.

²⁸ “Exploiting America’s Declining Pressure: Iran’s Nuclear Escalation Over Time.” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, December 2021.
<https://www.fdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/fdd-visual-exploiting-america-declining-pressure-iran-nuclear-escalation.pdf>.

Moreover, many of the administration's accommodations, such as removing the Iran-backed Houthis from the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations, endangered Americans as the Houthis increased attacks on U.S. forces even before the terrorist attack on Israel and increased regional tensions.²⁹ This failure of American diplomacy and deterrence can be best summarized by the Houthis, a once "ragtag militia"³⁰ firing a long-range surface-to-surface missile toward Tel Aviv on Sunday.³¹

Finally, Iran's increasing involvement in regional instability, particularly its military support for Russia in Ukraine, underscores the administration's inability to curtail Iran's authoritarian expansion. Iran has provided drones and missiles to Russia, contributing to Moscow's war effort, while continuing to threaten U.S. interests in the Middle East. In essence, the Biden administration's Iran strategy has categorically failed in every measurable way.

China

Just as the Biden-Harris administration has failed to effectively deter our other enemies, he is running the risk of failing to lead against our greatest threat—China.

Comparatively, the administration's approach to China has been the least conciliatory. Bolstering alliances in Asia, the AUKUS security partnership, concentrated efforts to restrict Chinese access to American technology, and substantial bipartisan consensus on challenging China are positive developments. Yet, the Biden administration's hallmark embrace of diplomatic ease with authoritarian leaders—in this case, the Chinese—runs the risk of tipping into "managing competition" rather than winning.³²

²⁹ Joseph Haboush. "American forces suffered 78 Iranian attacks since 2021: US general." *Al Arabiya* (Saudi Arabia), March 23, 2023.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2023/03/23/American-forces-suffered-78-Iranian-attacks-since-2021-US-general>.

³⁰ Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt. "How a Ragtag Militia in Yemen Became a Nimble U.S. Foe." *The New York Times*, January 24, 2024.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/24/us/politics/houthis-red-sea-airstrikes.html>.

³¹ Barak Ravid. "Houthis launch long-range missile attack against Israel." *Axios*, September 15, 2024.

<https://www.axios.com/2024/09/15/houthis-israel-missile-strike>.

³² Matthew Pottinger and Mike Gallagher. "No Substitute for Victory." *Foreign Affairs*, September 16, 2024.

https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/no-substitute-victory-pottinger-gallagher?check_logged_in=1&utm_medium=promo_email&utm_source=lo_flows&utm_campaign=article_link&utm_term=article_email&utm_content=20240916.

Carl von Clausewitz, the great military theorist, argued that “the first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.”³³ The U.S. is in a new cold war with China. Attempts to temper or tame that reality only increase the likelihood of an actual war.

When Foreign Policy Fails, Women and Girls Pay the Highest Price

As a leader in an organization that works daily to inform women about how policy issues impact them, I would be remiss if I did not also highlight how collapses in American power and failed foreign policy have eroded women’s and girls’ rights around the world. The United Nations reported a 50 percent increase in verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence from 2022 to 2023.³⁴

Both state and non-state armed groups have systematically targeted civilians with acts of sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, and abduction, amidst unprecedented levels of global migration and displacement.³⁵

This violence has not only devastated the lives of individual victims but has also had far-reaching societal consequences, severely limiting women’s livelihoods and restricting girls’ access to education in many countries around the world. This is particularly true in Afghanistan where, as one young woman described, women and girls have lost “all their hope in the world.”³⁶

Female students and working women, in particular, have been subjected to draconian restrictions and outright torture at the hands of the Taliban. An unnamed activist was gang-raped and tortured by armed Taliban men and, in a video obtained by The Guardian, was told, “You’ve been f***ed by Americans all these years and now

³³ Carl Von Clausewitz. “On War.” *Project Gutenberg*, May 1994.
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1946/1946-h/1946-h.htm>.

³⁴ Antony J. Blinken. “Breaking the Cycle of Sexual Violence in Conflict.” *U.S. Department of State*, June 20, 2023.
<https://www.state.gov/breaking-the-cycle-of-sexual-violence-in-conflict/#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20reported%20a,violence%20from%202022%20to%202023.>

³⁵ United Nations. “Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.” *United Nations*, May 2024.
<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SG-2023-annual-reports-mallFINAL.pdf>.

³⁶ IW Features. “Abandoned: How Life Went Dark for Afghan Women.” *IW Features*, August 15, 2023. <https://www.iwfeatures.com/abandoned-how-life-went-dark-for-afghan-women/>.

it's our turn."³⁷ One 25-year-old Afghan YouTuber, Hora Sadat, mysteriously died after attending a public event.³⁸ Another activist, Freshta Kohistani, was shot dead in a wave of similar assassinations.³⁹ Hundreds of reported cases of femicide in Afghanistan have emerged since America withdrew from the region, and new data analysis suggested that's just "the tip of the iceberg."⁴⁰

Outside of Afghanistan, armed groups and violent extremist organizations have directly profited from this exploitation, using sexual violence as a tool of power and control, while fueling conflict-driven trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. This is particularly true in places like Yemen,⁴¹ Libya,⁴² and Sudan.⁴³

Women and girls, who bear the brunt of conflict-related sexual violence, are disproportionately affected. Yet, despite the immense toll on their communities and futures, oftentimes their voices remain sidelined or entirely absent in key decision-making processes related to peace, security, and conflict resolution. The lack of female representation in these critical forums perpetuates cycles of violence and insecurity, leaving women and girls with little agency in shaping the policies and interventions meant to address their suffering. This exclusion not only undermines their rights but also hampers the broader prospects for sustainable peace and social recovery.

³⁷ Zahra Joya, Chris McGreal, Khudadad Poladi, Annie Kelly, and Tom Levitt. "Video Appears to Show Gang Rape of Woman in a Taliban Jail." *The Guardian*, July 3, 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/jul/03/video-appears-to-shows-gang-rape-of-woman-in-a-taliban-jail>.

³⁸ Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA). "Death of Popular Female Afghan YouTuber Prompts Anger." *RAWA News*, August 25, 2023. <http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2023/08/25/death-of-popular-female-afghan-youtuber-prompts-anger.html>.

³⁹ Al Jazeera. "Afghan Women's Rights Activist Shot Dead." *Al Jazeera*, December 24, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/24/afghan-womens-rights-activist-shot-dead>.

⁴⁰ Mark Townsend. "Hundreds of Cases of Femicide Recorded in Afghanistan Since Taliban Takeover Are 'Tip of the Iceberg'." *The Guardian*, August 15, 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/aug/15/hundreds-of-cases-of-femicide-recorded-in-afghanistan-since-taliban-takeover-are-tip-of-the-iceberg>.

⁴¹ Moammar Al-Eryani. "Preventing the Next Kabul: Confronting the Houthis' Violent Suppression of Women in Yemen." *Wilson Center*, March 10, 2023. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/preventing-next-kabul-confronting-houthis-violent-suppression-women-yemen>.

⁴² United Nations. "Libya: Alarming Levels of Violence Against Women and Girls Must End, Says UN Expert." *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, December 12, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/12/libya-alarming-levels-violence-against-women-and-girls-must-end-says-un>.

⁴³ Nahid Widaatalla. "Bodies as Battlefields: Gender-Based Violence in Sudan." *Think Global Health*, June 20, 2023. <https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/bodies-battlefields-gender-based-violence-sudan>.

Conclusion

Many of the failures outlined here represent systematic breakdowns in leadership, from the White House to individual agency leadership. There has been a startling lack of accountability, and Americans have taken notice.

When accountability is neglected, the consequences are clear and far-reaching. In any institution—whether a government, business, or community—trust is built on the assurance that mistakes will be addressed and corrected. Without that, confidence in leadership erodes, and people begin to lose faith in those responsible for their well-being.

Similarly, when no one is held responsible for errors, those mistakes inevitably repeat. There's no incentive to learn or improve, and instead, poor decisions become normalized. This creates a culture where people feel free to act without consequence, knowing their failures won't be met with repercussions. Over time, this lack of accountability lowers standards across the board. People become complacent, realizing that mediocrity is tolerated, and no one is expected to perform at their best.

This also leads to moral hazard. When people are not held accountable, they are more likely to take unnecessary risks, knowing others will bear the consequences. Worse, leaders who fail to enforce accountability lose credibility. Over time, their authority is weakened, and they can no longer effectively lead. Once that credibility is lost, it is incredibly difficult to regain, further damaging the institution they represent.

Ultimately, the cost of ignoring accountability is not just organizational inefficiency. Whether it's inaction in the face of a crisis, or policies that fail to protect the most vulnerable, the consequences of unaddressed failures compound. Without accountability, the price is eventually paid in the form of deteriorated systems, weakened institutions, deepened crises, and chaos. Tragically, it is Americans who are bearing the brunt of those costs.