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Biden's Victory: Is the Worst Yet to Come?



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When the media declared Joe Biden the projected winner of the 2020 presidential election on Saturday, November 7th, millions of Americans celebrated with heart-felt relief, street rallies and a belief that a better tomorrow is possible. Unfortunately, that tomorrow is under serious threat.

After four years in office one thing about Donald Trump has become transparently clear – he is a petty, vindictive man. He never admits mistakes and makes false statements whenever they serve his purpose. In the face of an apparent electoral repudiation, he – and his team led by Rudi Giuliani and Bill Barr – is seeking to overturn the election results through dubious legal challenges. His strategy will likely fail, even with his successful packing of the Supreme Court with arch conservatives.

In all likelihood, Trump will turn over the presidency to Biden on Inauguration Day, January 20th. However, if he refuses to cede power, even if the Court rejects his claims regarding the legitimacy of the elections, a true national crisis could result.

In his acceptance speech, Biden outlined five key issues that he would address as president: The battle to control the virus. The battle to build prosperity. The battle to secure your family's health care. The battle to achieve racial justice and root out systemic racism in this country. The battle to save the climate. The battle to restore decency, defend democracy and give everybody in this country a fair shot.

The challenge facing Biden and the new Democratic administration when it takes control of the federal bureaucracy are considerable. Whether it can delivery on these – and other – issues is an open question. Given the likely make-up of the Senate, with Republicans maintaining numerical control, Biden political hands may well be tied much like Pres. Obama's second term. More problematic, Biden is a traditional "liberal" or moderate and will likely resist efforts by more "progressive" Democrats to advance major legislation that could adequately address the deepening economic issues facing the nation.

A critical assessment of four of the five issues Biden identified outlines some of the likely challenges the new administration will face.

Covid-19 Control – As of early November, over 10 million Americans were infected and nearly 240,000 have died of the coronavirus. One of Biden's first actions after his projected electoral victory was to outline a "[science](#)" based plan to "beat Covid-19." The cornerstone of the plan is to "Provide clear, consistent, evidence-based guidance for how communities should navigate the pandemic – and the resources for schools, small businesses, and families to make it through." One of the defining aspects of the plan is to establish a "Pandemic Testing Board like Roosevelt's War Production Board. It's how we produced tanks, planes, uniforms, and supplies in record time, and it's how we will produce and distribute tens of millions of tests."

In addition, the plan calls for "the effective, equitable distribution of treatments and vaccines — because development isn't enough if they aren't effectively distributed." It seeks to "ensure everyone — not just the wealthy and well-connected — in America receives the protection and care they deserve, and consumers are not price gouged as new drugs and therapies come to market."

The most challenging part of the plan is its call to "implement mask mandates nationwide ..." It declares that "President-elect Biden will continue to call on:

- + Every American to wear a mask when they are around people outside their household.
- + Every Governor to make that mandatory in their state.
- + Local authorities to also make it mandatory to buttress their state orders."

Will "every American," "governors" or "local authorities" go along with such a plan? It's clear that such a mandate should have been implemented when the virus first appeared nine months ago and that failing to do so was Trump's greatest failure of leadership. One can only wonder whether such a mandate will be adhered to now as people seem more resigned to their fate and many anti-virus militants (including Q-Anon supporters) will resist.

Build Prosperity – The U.S. is the throws of recession that could topple into [a depression](#). The recession began in February 2020, just around the time the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic struck. Two Harvard economists, David Cutler and Lawrence Summers, paint a grim picture of [total costs of the pandemic](#). “The total cost is estimated at more than \$16 trillion, or approximately 90% of the annual gross domestic product of the US,” they wrote. “Approximately half of this amount is the lost income from the COVID-19–induced recession; the remainder is the economic effects of shorter and less healthy life.”

In May, House Democrats Leader Nancy Pelosi proposed a \$3 trillion Covid recovery plan that — after months of wrangling with the White House and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell — died on the vine. If the Senate remains under Republican control, one can expect a similar standoff over a Biden plan for relief and recovery.

The word “[inequality](#)” is absent from Biden’s acceptance speech and one can only wonder why? The income gap between the rich and everyone else has been growing markedly, by every major statistical measure, for more than 30 years. The Covid pandemic and the recession have only made the situation worse – and one can expect it to deepen over the first year or two of Biden’s administration.

Racial Justice – The Biden campaign is notable for two critical cultural developments. One is selecting Kamala Harris as his running mate and her provisional election as the nation’s first woman and first woman-of-color as Vice President. Second, Biden’s acceptance speech was noteworthy for one critical sentence: “The battle to achieve racial justice and root out systemic racism in this country.”

Very few establishment politicians ever refer to the endemic nature of American racism as “systemic” and Biden can be applauded for it, especially in light of his questionable role in promoting the 1994 crime bill that paved the way to mass incarceration of Black Americans. A real test of the Biden and Harris stand on racial justice will likely come at an unexpected moment in an unlikely city when a police officer shoots and kills an unarmed Black man. Biden called the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests a “wake up call for our nation.” However, if popular political action invoking the spirit of the BLM movement might lead to significant outrage, even “violent” demonstrations and looting, what would the new administration do?

Biden will likely not deploy federal marshals like the Trump administration did in an effort to show it was tough on “law and order.” Biden and Harris may turn the page on traditional forms of social control, but this is yet to be determined.

Save the Climate – In his acceptance speech and his candidate “[plan](#),” Biden never refers to “climate change.” He does advocate a \$2 trillion plan to further a “clean energy revolution and environmental justice.” Among the key features of this plan include: cut carbon emissions from power plants; cut greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector; cut

particulate matter air pollution; and increase climate spending to rural and urban low-income areas, especially among “BIPOC” (i.e., Black, Indigenous, and people of color).

Greenpeace has raised some concerns about his climate plan. They include the fact the cuts in greenhouse gas emissions is for 2050 and carbon pollution-free electric power by 2035. It warns [the following](#):

He’s pledged to eliminate coal, gas, and oil subsidies and hold polluters accountable, but has not pledged to reject permits for new fossil fuel infrastructure. He made strong commitments to coal and power plant workers, but has not promised to guarantee wages and benefits to all workers impacted by the energy transition.

At best, one should hold one’s breath to see if Biden fulfills his goals.

The two major political parties realigned over the last quarter-century into self-contained contradictions. The Republicans – once the party of the old bourgeoisie and country-club gentry – have become, especially under Trump, a White “populist” and racist party. The Democrats seek to embrace the tech *nouveau riche* along with inner-city Blacks and other minorities.

Both parties may well explode. Republicans may face split a deepening split between pro-Trump reactionaries like Lindsey Graham, who could forge a Tea Party-type opposition, and more moderates Republicans like Susan Collins and Mitt Romney. In addition, the Never Trump Republicans will likely call for the good-old-days of the Bushes and return to a country club party. Trump’s supporters will harden the party’s ideological arteries and build a grassroots movement that could lead to an ever more reactionary.

This situation may well be further exasperated if there is a deepening split within the Republicans as pro-Trump reactionaries like Lindsey Graham forge a Tea Party-type opposition to more moderates Republicans like Susan Collins and Mitt Romney. This situation may well be further exasperated if there is a deepening split within the Republicans as pro-Trump reactionaries like Lindsey Graham forge a Tea Party-type opposition to more moderates Republicans like Susan Collins and Mitt Romney. A similar fracturing may split the Democrats, with moderate’s embracing Biden’s vision of social reconciliation without struggle or a fundamental change in social relations. In reaction, so-called “progressives” may well push for a viable “democratic socialist” alternative.

And the White working class: what will be its fate in an increasing fractured political environment?

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