

Joe Biden's Free Shave

Everyone who wishes America well must always hope that an incoming president of the United States is successful.

by Conrad Black



Some have been more vociferous in their criticism of Joe Biden than I have, but few have been more consistent. I've never forgiven him for what he did to my friend Robert Bork in 1987, a great man who would have been an outstanding Supreme Court justice. Biden as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee appeared to be ready to support the former solicitor general until Teddy Kennedy gave his infamous address, including his defamatory accusation that Robert Bork's America would reduce American women to back-alley abortions, among other conjured degradations.

It is hard to take seriously an incoming president when one of his previous campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination folded before he reached the plateau of two percent support because he was caught red-handed cribbing from an

absurd campaign platitude authored by one of 20th-century Britain's least successful opposition leaders, Neil Kinnock.

It is disconcerting that any president-elect manufactures his academic career and invents episodes of arrest in South Africa, especially in the context of attempting to visit Nelson Mandela 600 miles from where his brief alleged detention took place. In 50 years of public life, he has faced in all four directions on every issue and is not strongly identified with any particular major achievement. No one qualified to do so has contradicted former defense secretary and CIA director Robert Gates, who served presidents of both parties in high office, when he remarked, after writing that Joe Biden, although a pleasant and generous-hearted man, had been mistaken on every foreign and strategic policy subject of the last 30 years.

I respect everyone's religious views from committed atheism to fervent practice, and almost all sides of the abortion issue, apart from opinions that are insane or sociopathic, but as a devoted but tolerant Roman Catholic I find it annoying that Joe Biden has portrayed himself as a pious co-religionist, even as he approved the prosecution of the Little Sisters of the Poor for declining to pay for the abortions and other birth control requirements of those in their charge or employment.

Tricks and Bungles

Before this column metamorphoses into one of goodwill and hopefulness for the president-elect, I must add that Biden can hardly be completely absolved from what I believe has been a scandalous but successful campaign for the presidency. The Democratic Party elders, to prevent a presidential candidacy of the unfeasibly and abrasively socialistic Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), retrieved Joe Biden from the ditch where the early Democratic primary voters had left him, installed him as the candidate, and placed him, like the groom on the top of

the wedding cake, atop a Sanders socialist platform.

The Democratic strategists saw at once the potential to reverse Trump's clear lead in the polls after the impeachment fiasco almost a year ago by terrorizing the living Jehovah out of the entire population over COVID-19. President Trump's tactical bungling of the public relations effort surrounding the virus made their task easier.

But Biden's masked self-captivity in his basement, his inarticulation contending with the background noise of what he called "Canadian geese," while the Democrats' lackeys in the national political media and the totalitarian czars of the Big Tech cartel conducted his campaign for him and silenced and defamed his enemies, and dismissed a grand jury investigation of the Biden family's international financial activities as "Russian disinformation" was a shabby campaign. It was perhaps the least creditable Democratic presidential campaign since General George B. McClellan, whom President Lincoln had fired for his diffident performance as commander of the Army of the Potomac, ran against Lincoln on a defeatist Civil War platform in 1864, even as General Sherman occupied Atlanta and General Grant invested Richmond.

Having got all that off my chest, it is time, while contemplating Lincoln, to "take increased devotion" from Herblock's [famous cartoon](#) of Richard Nixon on the eve of his inauguration in 1969. The political cartoonist had been in the habit of portraying Nixon with a stubbly and rodentine face often emerging from under a manhole cover, because of Nixon's former zeal as an anti-Communist congressman and senator. As his inauguration approached, and Tom Wicker wrote in the *New York Times* that the chances were 50-50 that Nixon would blow up the world, Herblock decided every new president of the United States should get a free shave.

Hoping for “Normalcy”

Everyone who wishes America well, and even those who only hope that America does well enough to spare the world the terrible challenge of having China as its most powerful nation—potentially the first one with no Judeo-Christian background nor any demonstrated respect for human rights or civil liberties since the rise of the nation-state—all must always hope that an incoming president of the United States is successful.

And in this case, there is no doubt that the new president is an amiable personality, a sincerely patriotic American, and fundamentally a man of moderation, ideologically more like Clinton than Obama; Humphrey and Mondale more than McGovern. He is a survivor, and that is a remarkable achievement: as Tennyson wrote, “old age hath yet his honor and his toil.”

Joe Biden has persevered through long years of comparative obscurity, family tragedy, his full share of condescension, disparagement, and setbacks, and the American political system assures that no one moves into the White House without a considerable combination of perseverance, acuity, and good fortune. As Napoleon famously said, “The best generals are the luckiest generals.”

There is some political symmetry in Biden’s elevation. The greatest single problem with the Trump Administration was the endless controversy; the president was constantly in the face of the public and of the world, all day every day and all night on Twitter. (The czar of Twitter, Jack Dorsey, may have done Trump a favor dictatorially removing him from his platform—the outgoing president’s popularity will rise if the country can take a rest from him for a while.) America’s greatest political desire was greater quiet and “normalcy” in Washington. In this way, the system has worked, as we are moving from a human tornado to the most languid chief executive since Calvin Coolidge.

Sometimes a change is as good as a rest. Although Joe Biden is a waffler and schmoozer, all indications are that he is a genuine man of the center comfortable and very competent at negotiating with reasonable people in both parties, and a capable judge of what can be achieved within the system where he has operated skillfully for many decades. Since he is very unlikely to covet a second term, he can make arrangements with the Republican leaders in the Congress, most of whom are his friends, without feeling unduly threatened by the far Left within his own party.

It was a terrible campaign following an awful summer of riots, hypocrisy, and fear-mongering, and concluding in the most suspect presidential election result in American history. But in its ineluctable fashion, the system has produced the 44th direct successor to General George Washington in what has long been the world's most influential office. Those who value freedom in every land will wish him well. Hail to the chief and may God renew His blessing on America.

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