



# Death By Compromise: Will the Biden Administration Do What People Actually Want Or Play Politics?

By Alex Roberts



ASOM

The more things change, the more they remain the same.

Trump's inherent flaw is that he failed to tap into his own political potential. Yes, he is an uncouth racist who harbours American isolationist instincts and is hell-bent on division. It would be a mistake, however, to ignore the fact that his greatest attraction was due to the economy. In essence, the real situation of many working people in the US had grown so difficult that out of desperation they threw in their lot with a two-bit huckster who claimed that he could make all their empty-wallet woes disappear into the ether of history. Now upper middle class liberals in places like Seattle, Washington, Madison, Wisconsin and the suburbs of New York City are scratching their heads and wondering just how, *how* could so many millions still vote for this abomination after all that has happened during his time in the White House?

There has been an outright refusal by many on the left to acknowledge that the Trump base are anything but hidden racists, now magically freed to unmask themselves by some sort of Orange Pied Piper. Now as the Trump camp closes shop and flies away from the White House in shame, Biden is beginning his presidential term under deeply bizarre circumstances. The election victory, the

transition and the first few weeks of the Democratic administration were met with some jubilation, but overall the response to Biden's victory was rather tepid, especially when compared to the response that greeted Obama.

So why the underlying feeling of trepidation? It could have something to do with the well-deserved hand-wringing coming from the left wing of the party, seemingly left out in the cold for the last several months (at least since they were largely locked out of the Democratic National Convention last August). They had been promised a seat at the table, but that chair appears to have been lost in the move. What does this mean exactly?

Well, the Biden team and cabinet is being packed with the same type of lobbyists, centrists, supporters of the Iraq war and even billionaire Democrats disenchanting with the Obama administration who helped to turn the tide against Hillary Clinton during the 2016 race. One Washington insider quipped that the cabinet picks for the Biden administration looked like a guest list for a bourgeois dinner party in the upper crust Washington DC neighbourhood of Georgetown. It includes some of the same minds that helped to walk back the Obama White House from a more progressive agenda. Already Democrats are walking back the very promises that brought them to power — such as promising US\$2000 cheques and now floating “hopefully US\$1400, because the US\$600 sent in early January and the new round of US\$1400 would equal US\$2000”. This goes against Occam's razor principle, where the simplest solution is usually the right one. In this instance, the smart thing to do would be to send the full amount immediately, because a desperate public doesn't give a damn about technocratic reasoning and austerity measures. In America's skewed political structure, the prospect of the Democrats staying in long-term control of the US government is tenuous at best.

For example, in a year absolutely stuffed to the brim with progressive sentiments and activism across the US, why did the Democrat-controlled House actually lose seats (narrowing their majority)? As projections were touted across the media for months on end, and innumerable polls read the tea leaves to project an utterly massive Democratic win in the US Senate, the forecasts proved utterly wrong. In the end, the Democrats took the Senate by flipping Georgia's two seats in January, but back in November several infamous Republicans, projected as vulnerable, held onto their seats by wide margins of victory.

Now Biden is already falling into the trap of being too bipartisan — a concept that doesn't yield results and doesn't truly affect anyone's day-to-day lives. Republicans sure as hell don't do bipartisan. In fact, Mitch McConnell, the controversial Senate minority leader from the state of Kentucky, had given himself the awkward moniker of the Grim Reaper during the Obama years, focusing solely on killing off any legislation that the Democratic Party brought forward, resulting in stagnation, political fallout and economic destitution for millions — and all that was *before* the scourge of COVID-19 revealed America's system to be a mere façade of a true empire.

If this is the way forward, then the US is truly in dire straits and Biden may easily face another Trump-esque arch-conservative again in four years, or perhaps even Trump himself; he seems intent on positioning himself as a media figure, holding continuous rallies, never admitting that he truly lost, and then riding down another escalator some time in June of 2022. If the Biden presidency is making excuses and is handicapped before even beginning, especially during this time, then maybe it is the modern Democratic Party that is truly in jeopardy.

To put it bluntly, there are absolutely massive problems facing the US right now, ones that could well put an end to its status as a global leader and reputation as a democracy. This winter has thrown tens of thousands into starvation, cast millions into poverty and consolidated power further in the tentacled grasp of a corporate elite. COVID-19 killed over 100,000 Americans during the

month of January 2021 alone. Now the status quo has returned to Washington DC, but the Democratic elite are acting as though that is a good thing, not seeing that the writing on the wall has been there since the financial crisis of 2008, a groundswell of populism that will soon be hard to ignore.

Rather than doing away with archaic filibuster and trying to confer statehood on DC and Puerto Rico and instead immediately passing a massive economic stimulus package, the Democrats are dithering and posturing with austerity-tinged deals and half measures that accord Republicans some sort of input. There could be very serious repercussions for the left wing and the right wing in two years if political action is not taken to get both the economic crisis and the pandemic under control within the next few months.

Looking ahead, however, it seems as though once again the youth will be blamed for whatever future is to come in the political landscape. It will be claimed that they will not have voted in large enough numbers (despite the rates being similar for nearly every single election amongst voters under 30 since the 1950s). They'll be called lazy, entitled, ignorant, and the argument will be made for incremental change by an assortment of millionaire octogenarian figures within the Democratic leadership.

The progressive wing has already been blamed by the more conservative elements of the party for it not being a wide enough victory, with Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger of Virginia (who used to work for the CIA and represents some of the richest people in America) stating in a taped conference call in the days after the November general election that if progressive ideals (or the specter of socialism) are put on the ballot, then Democratic candidates will get "fucking torn apart in the 2022 election". This despite the fact that it was the more centrist candidates who faced tougher competition in their election bids, and the further to the left a candidate was, the better they performed overall.

So why would a multitude of people vote in the next midterm elections in 2022 or the next presidential election in 2024? The phrase "getting turned on" inherently means that some effort has been made, something has turned you on to that idea or cause to propel you to join or vote for it. Such are the problems that the current party is grappling with. It is bogged down in partisan signaling and identity-based politics, while not actually advancing any progressive agenda, blaming the youth and the far left that could save them from their underperformance in the United States congressional races, and refusing to negotiate meaningful stimulus packages to revive a US economy that has been in the COVID-19-drenched economic doldrums since 2020.

The Democrats have pigeonholed themselves as a middling, tedious political entity, one that turns people off in droves and panders to the wealthier coastal suburbanites. The numbers don't lie; while they had projected that adding Kamala Harris to the vice presidential slot would bolster their bloc amongst minorities, this didn't play out, and Latinos, Blacks and Asian Americans voted for Biden at a lower rate than they did for Clinton in 2016. The question goes unanswered: could voters be more concerned about their economic standing during a pandemic-induced depression than about the racial makeup of the candidate on the ticket? Such thoughts can easily get one removed from the good graces of the current Democratic establishment, even as the possibility of rallying their base seems to diminish by the day.

For starters, anyone vaguely on the left already despises Donald J. Trump, and felt that way even before the last 11 disastrous months. The Democratic Party didn't need to convince anyone here, but the Biden team spent most of the primaries solely attacking Trump for being the useless self-obsessed goon that he is. They then proceeded to not hammer him nearly hard enough when the disaster truly arrived, instead leaning back into the tropes of tired-eyed neo-conservatives from the

George W. Bush era (some of the same talking heads who pushed messaging for the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars) and continuously beaming over advertisements coming from anti-Trump Republicans like the “Lincoln Project”. More centrist media outlets like MSNBC fawned over these “high-minded idealists” and simultaneously ridiculed left-wing figures for questioning if this would truly be a progressive administration.

This is an avoidable issue, but as the leadership within Congress (House Majority leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority leader Chuck Schumer) can’t be moved from their messaging, this slow-moving car is heading for a cliff. Biden can either push the pedal down to the floor and drive off to an untimely death or pull the emergency brake and change course.

Democrats could have run on the progressive economic policies that they tip-toed around during this last horrifying year. They could have at least pretended to embrace a sweeping set of policies unseen since the Great Depression of the 1930s. If they had, there is a very real possibility that their lead in the House would have increased and they would have at least been able to flip the Senate. They didn’t. Instead they bowed to outside interests and fucked around politically, even leaving stimulus on the table. Now, the same crowd that pushed for bombing Libya under Obama is back into the fold, all within the same umbrella of a “well needed return to normalcy”. Normal sucks in America.

The real middle class has been dying for a long time, but it seems the Biden administration can’t actually wrap their heads around this fact. Instead, it seems as though they’ll be content to simply reverse some of Trump’s uglier policies and call it a winning formula. In fact, that’s exactly what Biden did on day one of his administration instead of passing executive orders regarding COVID-19.

So, if the Democratic Party continues on the trajectory they are on, who exactly do they intend to turn on? If anything, millions have been utterly turned off by the state of politics in the United States, and if an individual doesn’t stand to actually benefit, what is the benefit of supporting a political party? Back to normal shouldn’t have been the banner of the Democratic party in 2020; it should have been like the title of a horror movie to be run away from as quickly as can be messaged by PR officials in the corridors of the United States capitol.

Tragedies earn their names by reflecting the failures that weren’t overcome although they could have been. In years to come, the fear shouldn’t be Trump himself per se — he was much too incapable to be an outright authoritarian, and too big a coward to really make such moves anyway. It should be the fear of those for whom Trump was the unwieldy flagbearer.

The worry should really be: who will come after Trump? With all of the so-called “rising stars” on the right wing in the US right now, someone will crawl out of the primordial ooze to usurp an aging Donald Trump. Could such a figure manage to turn on a large enough swath of Millennial and Generation Z voters distraught at the economic conditions brought on by previous generations, and in less than four years from now sweep to a landslide victory over Joe Biden/Kamala Harris/another middling Democrat who doesn’t inspire?

What if the next one is some kind of ultra-conservative Evangelical someone with all of the idealism of a Vice President Mike Pence and none of the soul-sucking lack of charisma? What kind of irreversible damage could such a figure actually do? Not all totalitarians are useless, some are altogether efficient.

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