



## Is Joe Biden our FDR for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

*... The man to heal wounds and put America (and the planet) back on track.*

**They said he was too old, too left, and too soft, but come 2100 could Biden go down in history as *JRB*, admired similarly to *FDR* in the 1930s?**

Almost 90 years on, Joseph R. Biden takes over the helm of an ailing United States of America, much the same as Franklin D. Roosevelt did in the dark days of *the Great Depression*. The similarities are profound: both had enormous tragedies in their personal lives, both were first elected to political office when decidedly young, and crucially, both followed on the heels of poor presidencies (in Biden's case, many would say disastrous presidency!), confronted from the start with overwhelming difficulties.

1930s USA found itself in the depths of the worst economic crisis ever known, but 2020s USA has, arguably, an even more daunting set of circumstances to overcome, with the pandemic, climate crisis, racial unrest and beleaguered economy, all rolled into one!

Biden, many said, is too old for the job, too much a socialist, too much a disciple of Obama. Yet confounding all the doomsayers, he has pulled together a star cast of experienced leaders in different fields, representing the wide-ranging US population: female and male;

young and not so young; black, brown, white; Indigenous American and those with Asian, African, Latin, and European heritage. They are all there, in complete contrast to the almost all-white, male dominated administration of the previous incumbent.

More importantly, Joe has hit the ground at full tilt, with his posse in support, immediately beginning to reform what had been a markedly poor response to the pandemic, whilst also laying down the gauntlet to Big Oil and climate crisis deniers, that from now on business should be done with the climate crisis in mind, and not - as has been the case for the past four years – by spreading untruths and subverting the science.

Biden also realizes that if these hugely important reforms are to be long-lasting, then he must win hearts and minds. Thus, he is putting in place a coordinated vaccination system, with strict deadlines: 100 million in 100 days; most of the US population by September. This is no mean task, but JRB, like FDR with his New Deal, knows that success rides on achievement ... and being seen to achieve. In the global context, he would also do well to reach out to developing countries, with practical support for the COVAX initiative.

On the climate crisis it is enormously important that the US has a politician with John Kerry's standing and experience to drive that agenda. Kerry helped construct the Climate Agreement in Paris, five years ago, he knows the background and is devoted to the cause. He, like Biden, has children and grandchildren, whom they both know stand to suffer greatly in the future, if pragmatic steps are not taken to limit the extent of the crisis that threatens us, today.

On top of all the challenges within social, environmental, and economic spheres, perhaps the most important test will be political. Working with a slim majority in both house of Congress (and bolstered by his well-honed communication skills) Biden must aim to bring about reforms to America's antiquated electoral system. By doing so, this would offset a repeat of the post-Obama years, where a litany of advances (in the face of a hostile senate) was ruthlessly dismantled by his successor. it is imperative for America - and the world - that we do not witness a repeat shredding of progressive policies in 2025.

To illustrate the desperate need for electoral reform one only has to look at the current state of play, where the 2020 presidential election witnessed Democrats receiving over seven million votes more than Republicans, yet Biden's appointment was reliant on just 78,000 votes going his way in the electoral college system. The discrepancy is even wider for the US senate – the body which for years has stonewalled on liberal legislation – where each state (regardless of population) elects two senators, resulting in 53 Republican senators representing 59m people and 47 Democrats representing 67m (prior to the recent Georgia state run-offs). Today's US electoral process is far from democratic!

It is extremely unlikely that Biden, like Roosevelt, will be elected to four term in office, but if he is to become the FDR of our Century in just one term, it will require bold vision across many disciplines, along with protection mechanisms of the political kind, to ensure that positive changes sanctioned by his administration, do in fact remain in place.

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