

Is Biden truly committed to unity and moderation? There's hope, but time's running out

by Conrad Black



President Biden's [meeting](#) last Monday with 10 Republican senators seeking a compromise on COVID-19 relief legislation may be his first action on his promise to try to work with Republicans and promote political unity. It also may be the last opportunity to stop the Democrats' invocation of the reconciliation process enabling them, in budgetary matters, to pass bills through the Senate on a straight majority, rather than requiring 60 senators to concur.

There is little doubt that this is the Democrats' preferred avenue, after Senate Budget Committee Chairman [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.) lauded it as the way to get as much as

possible through on their 50 votes plus Vice President Harris' tie-breaking vote. There is no reason to believe Sens. [Joe Manchin](#) (D-W.Va.) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) – who have upheld the filibuster, requiring 60 votes for most issues – will be so bold on the reconciliation process. Before advocates of bipartisan cooperation get carried away with glee, they might recall that we heard the same sort of emollient noises from President Obama 12 years ago, but he finally had to pass ObamaCare on a straight-party vote.

The coming Senate [impeachment trial](#) of former [President Trump](#) will be a painful experience for its authors, including [Republicans who supported it](#). There is no chance of convicting Trump of an incitement he did not utter to a crime he would have opposed if he had had reason to think it might possibly occur; it is unconstitutional nonsense to use a device to remove an officeholder, who cannot be prosecuted in the normal way, against a president who left office on the expiry of his term. More importantly, Trump has signaled, by his change of counsel, that he intends to air – without inhibition, and immune to the gag that the woke national political media has tried to impose – his questions about the legitimacy of the last election.

Despite the waffling of establishment Republicans, and given Trump's [high standing](#) in the Republican Party nationally (confirmed by meetings of state party associations last week in Arizona, Hawaii and Oregon), most Republican senators will vote to acquit him, even if they give pious expressions of neutrality about the election. This will be all Trump needs to replicate Gen. Andrew Jackson's campaign from 1824 to 1828 against what he called the "corrupt bargain" between John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay, who trailed him in the 1824 election but organized to elect Adams in the House of Representatives, where Clay was speaker.

What House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) (D-Calif.) and her collaborators must have envisioned as the [ultimate denigration](#)

[of Trump](#) is now more likely to bring him back to world prominence and arm him with a powerful weapon in the next election. No one can dispute that Democrats have been tenacious and ingenious at harassment and obstruction, but that did not prevent Trump from accomplishing a great deal in gaining the support of nearly 50 percent of the country and pushing Democrats to the last extremity of media partisanship, social media dictatorship, stupefying campaign extravagance and political skulduggery in order to defeat him.

Up to now, President Biden has been devoted to satisfying his party's far left. We will soon find out if he really is seeking unity and passage of a moderate program or, as his more strident opponents claim, he is effectively a cats-paw of the socialistic group that Sen. Sanders believes comprises 35 to 40 percent of Democrats. The burning question is whether Biden's [flurry of leftist executive orders](#) is a placebo to the left before moving to the center, or the enunciation of Biden's policy preferences after 50 years of practical flexibility.

One of Biden's first measures was to rejoin the Paris Climate Accord, under which the United States was to inflict heavy economic penalties on its own workforce, to resume its status as an energy importer while deliberately shutting down a substantial part of America's energy-producing capability in pursuit of carbon-emission-free energy. The whole concept is nonsense, as the two principal polluters – China and India – are doing nothing in the next 20 years to comply with the Paris emission-reduction targets. China and India do not today agree on very much, but they agree on unctuously encouraging the West to do its environmental duty while they continue to darken their skies with the smoke of economic growth.

Vice President Harris' heavy-handed intervention on West Virginia television over the weekend, trying to pressure Sen. Manchin on COVID-19 relief, [backfired](#): Her fatuous references to re-employing skilled workers in "West Virginia minefields"

(meaning coal mines) were reminiscent of Obama's empty promises 12 years ago of "American, union, green jobs."

In the same category were Biden's announced liberalization of illegal immigration while demanding a \$15 hourly minimum wage and while feeding unemployment by killing the Keystone XL pipeline project and ending energy exploration on federal lands. Keystone is an emission-neutral pipeline, much more environmentally safe than the trucks and trains that would clumsily and more expensively continue to transport oil from Canada toward the Gulf of Mexico. Contrary to Biden's [inaugural address](#) promise to rebuild alliances, this measure will disemploy over 40,000 Canadians and about 21,000 Americans – an astonishingly destructive act against an ally. Biden is undoubtedly an able conciliator, and having made his gesture to the ecologically agitated faction of Democrats, he can now reinstate the pipeline in the context of a broader, environment-friendly agreement with Canada, a considerably greener jurisdiction than the United States.

Another divisive issue is Biden's move to facilitate abortions, to revive Planned Parenthood's funding and to re-extend abortion aid in developing countries. This runs contrary to the wishes of 77 percent of Americans who do not favor [unregulated abortion](#), and it flies in the face of this president's ostentatious Catholicism. He has put forward a secretary of Health and Human Services – [Xavier Becerra](#) – who is a fervent [abortion enthusiast](#).

The president has, however, wisely stayed away from the impeachment issue. An old hand around the Capitol, he may possibly use the inevitable fiasco of this impeachment to shift the balance of power within his party somewhat to the center. Less than two weeks into his administration, there is room for hope for such a change of direction. But the president will soon discover what every wind-instrument

musician knows: He can't suck and blow at the same time for much longer.

First published in