

**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**Politics in America
Joe Biden at the National Press Club**

Senator Joe Biden at the National Press Club Report One

May 13, 2013

In 2006, I listened to a speech by Joe Biden at the National Press Club, before he became Vice President of the United States and was in possible contention for the presidency. I re-read it and found it interesting in the context of his political path since that time. Thinking you might be of the same mind, here it is.

September 7, 2006

Hello from Your On the Street Reporter. Today, I attended a speech of Senator Joseph Biden (D-Del) at the National Press Club. As you may recall, in 2005 I filed reports on presentations at the Club by five conservatives and one movie star, and therefore, a liberal. Let's begin the report with this quote: *Equal time for other views, just like all our news media.*

OK, back to the subject. First, Senator Biden is going to run for President. I say this with 50 percent certainty. (Give or take 50 percent for human error.)

The first reason for my claim is Joe Biden is a handsome person. Attractiveness is the main factor of success in almost anything, as documented in my *National Enquirer* article, "The Ugly Factor." You may recall I proved that good-looking people are more successful than ugly people. Here is an excerpt from this report, altered for our current study (See Figure 1). To further substantiate my claim, take a look at Figure 2. Is that not Presidential material?

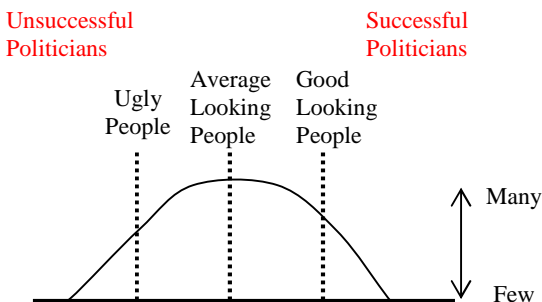


Figure 1. Bell Shaped Curve for Success in Politics.

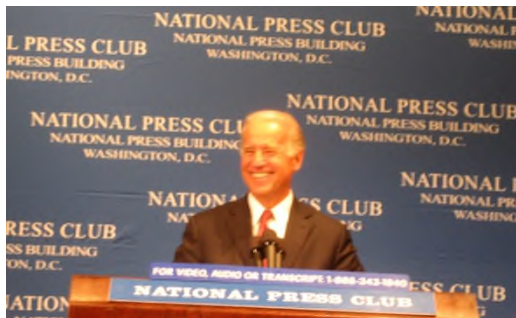


Figure 2. Groomed for success.

Granted, some of the most successful politicians are downright ugly. But usually, they became ugly after they were handsome or beautiful. Their constituents continue to elect them because, ugly or not, they bring in a lot of handsome and beautiful pork.

The Senator was late because the Senate had called a vote at the last moment. But he arrived shortly, we had an excellent lunch, and Joe began his bid for the Presidency by: What else? Assailing the current administration.

He was introduced to the audience by Club President Jonathan Salant with the tale that young Biden wrote a 6th grade essay about his becoming a priest or president. I'm not sure why, but the comment got a lot of laughs from the audience.

A Serious Electorate

The Senator began his talk, with, "I have never seen the electorate as serious---not frightened---but as serious in my entire political career."

Followed by, the current administration is operating on, "...wrong premises and wrong priorities."

Next, "Bush says we are at war. I agree." It is a military war and, "...a long term war on ideas."

An effective way to summarize Senator Biden's main points is to place his comments (paraphrased, unless in quotes) in a table and ask you to indicate if you agree or disagree with them. I'll report on the results later.

Statements About Current President	Agree	Disagree
Bush administration "has very bright people who have dug us into a very deep hole."		
"Failure to finish job in Afghanistan" and divert resources to Iraq was wrong.		
Muslim hearts and minds are up for grabs.		
The so-called Axis of Evil countries are more dangerous than they were five years ago.		
Because of our Iraq commitment, the enemy knows we are nailed-down.		
This administration does not have a strategy for Iraq.		
"If everything is important to you, then nothing is important to you." (note 1)		
Most of our problems in the world do not lend themselves to a military solution.		
Bush administration has soured the American people on the use of force.		
Bush is not a bad man; he is a bad President. His priorities are way off.		

(Note 1). Joe utters the statement often. I've heard it on C-SPAN radio and during a TV interview. I wish he would follow-up this sentence with a second sentence explaining what the first sentence means.

Many years ago, I read a statement that goes something to this effect, "America has never had a foreign policy that was acceptable to America's intellectuals." For this report, let's modify the

claim to, "American has never had a foreign policy that was acceptable to the party *out-of-power*."

If Joe were the President *in power*, here is what he would do (His four-point program to become President):

Statements to Become President	Agree	Disagree
Implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. (note 1)		
Switch from preemption to prevention. (note 2)		
Re-build our alliances. (note 3)		
Understand that democracy does not happen externally, but internally. (note 4)		

Notes reflect Biden's thoughts on his four statements above:

(note 1): Many recommendations have been ignored because of the lack of will and resources.

(note 2): The preemption mentality has led other countries to re-arm as quickly as possible before they are preempted.

(note 3): Unilateralism has proved to be a disaster and has isolated America from (even) friends.

(note 4): An election does not make for a democracy: See Palestine and Iran. Therefore, build the foundations for democratic institutions.

Interesting points, and I think it fair to say they are at odds with the Bush approach of his *first* term. With some latitude, let's use Joe's four points to assess George's approach of his *second* term. These four points are gleaned from Bush's speeches and interviews over the past few weeks:

Statements of the Current President	Agree	Disagree
9/11 Commission recommendations are important.		
We can't win the war on terrorism alone.		
Diplomacy is a long process. It's not simple, but it's the preferred way to go.		
Democracy takes time. We must be patient.		

I welcome your input on these tables. As mentioned, this last table reflects the statements President Bush has made since some of his former staff members left the White House for lucrative consulting and lobbyist jobs on K Street...and since Condi Rice has taken over the State Department.

Do his comments represent a shift in philosophy? I think so. I think they represent his recognition that as powerful as ideology is, it must, sooner or later, square itself with reality.

Joe thinks George is basically incompetent. He claims, "President Bush has run an incompetent administration and that is why you should vote the Republicans out of office."

What do you think? In keeping with my non-incisive political commentary, my take of George is as follows: *If a Texan can't do the Texas Two-Step, that Texan is incompetent.* During his second inaugural celebration, I watched George attempt the Texas Two-Step. The man can't dance the hallowed dance of Texas! He walks like a Texan. He brags like a Texan. He shoots like a Texan. He wears belt buckles like a Texans. He wears boots, accompanied with cowboy hats. And he

cuts down mesquite. But he can't dance the Texas Two-Step. Being from a Yankee family--- Midland, Texas, as a byway---he does not have the Texas Two-Step gene.

In the last segment of this report, we'll examine Joe's responses to questions from the audience.

Senator Joseph Biden at the National Press Club Report Two

September 7, 2006

We continue our analysis of Senator Joe Biden's speech at the National Press Club. The last part of the lunch was devoted to questions and answers, my favorite part of these get-togethers. In hindsight, I find them interesting. (Questions and answers are paraphrased. Comments inside brackets are mine.)

Question: Why has America not been attacked since 9/11?

Answer: We have them on the run, but they're still planning.

[Many attempts have been made, none of the magnitude of 9/11, but the attack at the 2013 Boston Marathon is the type that likely will continue in America.]

Question: Is the fact that we have not been attacked again attributable to Bush?

Answer: History will answer that question. [What does that mean?]

Question: Should Rumsfeld resign?

Answer: He's just implementing Bush's policies.

Question: How do we deal with a fragmented Iraq?

Answer: Give the Sunnis a piece of the action (part of the oil). [As of this writing, the ruling Shia tribe is beginning to lock horns with the northern Kurds about allocation of oil. In the meantime, tension (and attacks) are mounting between the Sunnis and the Shias.]

Question: Is Iraq broken?

Answer: Very close. And we are not helping: We can't continue to project ourselves as an uncivil society and expect to win a war of ideas.

Question: What should we do?

Answer: In addition to giving the Sunnis something, we should take on the Shiite military. We must put pressure on Iraq to govern themselves. They are involved in a sectarian war of revenge. [Senator Biden and President Bush, there is no way Americans' low threshold of tolerance for long range interventions is going to do a hill of beans worth of good. If you two think we are going to impose a solution---in a sound-bite manner---to a situation that has festered for two centuries, I've got a bridge in New York you might like to buy. We should not have gone to Iraq the second time.]

Senator Biden wrapped up with:

- I've been to Iowa; gave 39 speeches.
- Public is onto it (Iraq). They want solutions and none is being offered by the administration.

Joe was presented with a National Press Club coffee cup and everyone went their way.

Before this lunch, I had no opinions, one way or the other, about Joe Biden. I was impressed and agreed with many of his points. Of course, at this stage of the game, even the President would agree with many of them. And give President Bush some credit for admitting to some of his mistakes.

Negotiations

Senator Biden made a passing reference to an important issue: America's leaders should be talking to Iran's leaders. But the administration's stand is that this would reward past bad behavior. Fantastic, just consider the Cold War.

One reason the USSR and the US did not go to war was because we kept talking with each other ---even before those telephones between the White House and the Kremlin were installed. The back channels of Cold War diplomacy probably saved thousands of lives. The USSR's ambassador kept this channel going with our ambassadors for many years. It allowed the two enemies to keep each other at bay, yet explore possible common ground.

The current President of Iran sends our President a letter suggesting more dialogue. It's ignored. How can we converse with an Axis of Evil?

It was John Kennedy who said, *We should never negotiate out of fear, but we should never fear to negotiate.*

Lofty ideas. Let's make the idea more down to earth...and earthy. An LBJ aide asked Lyndon why he was negotiating with an adversary, why LBJ was even meeting with him. Johnson said, *I'd rather have my enemy inside my tent, pissing out, than outside my tent, pissing in.*

Listen up, George. A fellow Texan, who could dance the Texas Two Step, is offering you some advice.

Update to this essay: May 14, 2013.

Regarding some of Senator Biden's points: I'm not convinced reasonable nations can "negotiate" with other nations who have been conditioned to think their way is the *only* way. But I do believe even the most fanatical of humans can *sometimes* be swayed and/or held at bay. Cold War USSR is a prime example. Post Cold-War Libya is another.

As I have stated in earlier essays, America's model---that is, up until post 9/11---has been one that many young people all over the world admire and emulate. Will our model unto itself convince nations to go our way? For some countries, I think so. The trend since WWII, especially in Africa and South America, has been one toward nations electing their leaders. In the Middle East, the Arab Spring is playing out so far with the new governments leaning toward Sharia Law.

Among other points, Sharia Law is considered the infallible law of God, as opposed to the human interpretation of the laws. It is contradictory in many ways to democratic republicanism. Thus, the political missionary groups in America have armed themselves with yet more moral indignation, wondering why the U.S. does not intervene and convert those heathens.

One of my best friends, and a man better-versed in world affairs than I, ribs me that I living a pipe dream. Maybe so, but maybe my preference for prevention rather than intervention---back to the Cold War days---could save a lot of American dollars and lives.

Should we have gone to Afghanistan? Yes, and then left, instead of trying to change a nation of Islamic tribes to democratic Christians. Should we have gone to Iraq the first time? Yes, and we should have finished off Saddam the first time, and then left, instead of installing a Shia regime and upsetting the balance of power in the Middle East with the second war.