

In new book, Roche offers recovery for a wounded world in the new Biden era

The Joe Biden presidency is an opportunity for Canada and the world to step back from the brink and break free from the implied and sadly predictable global death wish.



Jim Creskey

Opinion

The Biden era has begun. Are we ready to make the most of it? Just when it's needed, *Recovery: Peace Prospects in the Biden Era*, comes along to help guide Canadian leaders through the maze of rigorous, practical decisions, not only to lead the world away from the deep damage caused by outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump, but to offer the steps needed to give our children a future.

It is ironic that this self-published book for the survival of the next generation is written by an author who is 91 years old, but not to anyone who has discovered that

many of our elders—our true elders and not those who have simply grown grey hair on their egos—have long been storing up the kind of wisdom that can light up some of the most darkened and dangerous corners of the world.

Its author, Doug Roche, was born in Montreal in 1929, and moved to Ottawa when he was a child. He was a schoolmate of John Turner, who would one day be prime minister, and of John Grace, who later become the editor of *The Ottawa Journal* and Canada's first privacy commissioner. Before all three went on to bigger and better things in life, each of them also edited St. Pat's High School newspaper. Roche went on to become the Progressive Conservative MP in Edmonton from 1972 to 1984. He later served as Canada's ambassador for disarmament from 1984 until 1989. In 1998, he was appointed to the Senate where he helped to raise the standards of that place until he retired in 2004.

Did I say, retired? Hardly.

Roche has dedicated his life to nuclear weapons disarmament with a passion that would wear out a 30 year old. And now he has come to a point in his life when a man who he once met as a fellow senator in 2001, Joe Biden, is providing the opening for not only repairing a terribly wounded nation, but reopening an agenda that creates a future for our children.

"On Dec. 4, 2001, Senator Joe Biden came to the Friends Conference Center in Philadelphia for a conference addressing the implications of missile defence on the development and deployment of offensive weapons in space," writes Roche.

"I was also a speaker on the program, and he greeted me as a fellow senator. Biden spoke to a pre-conference dinner,



Doug Roche, 91, one of Canada's leading advocates for peace, just self-published another book, *Recovery: Peace Prospects in the Biden Era*, which offers hope 'in the urgent agenda for human security.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Samantha Wright Allen

making a strong case that the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 presented an opportunity for the U.S. and Russia to finally take meaningful steps toward repairing a relationship that had been strained for decades. I was impressed at the time with the strength of his remarks, but did not feel that he was particularly progressive in his views. He struck me as an ambitious politician (a characterization I was in no position to criticize)."

Roche was disappointed to see Biden vote for the U.S. invasion of Iraq: "... an immense blunder that destabilized the Middle East and launched terrorist organizations throughout the region. It took many years before Biden admitted his vote was wrong and apologized for it."

But today Roche sees in Biden the learned gift of the ameliorator; the politician who, stepping out of his ego, is capable of bridging the great chasms that have opened up in the United States and the world.

It won't be easy. There is a lot of deep damage to be undone and the two paramount problems that put all our children's lives at risk—climate change and nuclear weapons—are now cast under the cloud of the coronavirus pandemic that is pushing 71 million people back into extreme poverty. But if there is one quality that Roche embodies, it is hope; a pragmatic hope built on the realism of great things already achieved—even in the face of powerful obstacles and governments that are "spooked, in many cases controlled by the military industrial complex."

"But this situation will not prevail forever," he writes. "It will give way to those who demand the right to peace, just as the forces of slavery, colonialism and apartheid gave way when the opposition became strong enough."

Even the pandemic offers some hope: "It has sped the growth of understanding that governments have a primary obligation to help the most vulnerable."

Roche knows where to find the money to finance the four pillars of human security: economic and social development; environmental protection; arms control and disarmament; and advancement of human rights which includes race and gender

"A 10 per cent cut in military budgets across the world would free up \$190-billion a year in extra funding for human needs. Canada could lead the way by devoting 10 percent of its military budget, which would amount to about \$2-billion.

"This will not be done if the old thinking prevails. It is all too easy for the cynics and traditionalists, who continue to occupy high places in government and the think tanks that feed ideas into it, to dismiss such a structural change in priorities as mere idealism. They believe the old ways, with perhaps a little tinkering around the edges, are quite enough for Canada to

espouse. They need to be jolted out of their lethargic thinking..."

Roche is certainly an idealist but his idealism is down-to-earth practical. His life efforts to cherish the future of our children are not quixotic romantic gestures. He is pragmatic, and most certainly political. The growth of populist nationalism during the Trump era has shored up and enlarged a rotten system that has cheered up dictators and arms dealers alike around the world. But the Biden presidency is an opportunity for Canada and the world to step back from the brink and break free from that implied and sadly predictable global death wish.

DOUGLAS ROCHE

RECOVERY
PEACE PROSPECTS IN THE BIDEN ERA



Douglas Roche's *Recovery: Peace Prospects in the Biden Era* could help lead to a recovery for a wounded world. Cover design by Khalid Yaqub

Roche's new book helps to draw a sensible diplomatic road map that promises to lead to our children's future. The world won't be turned on a dime. It will require trade-offs and sacrifices, two words that politicians hate. And it will take dedicated multilateral activity and rigorous involvement in the United Nations and other international organizations.

Please read Roche's little book, not only because I have 11 grandchildren, but because I am convinced that Roche's *Recovery* actually could lead to a recovery for a wounded world.

Recovery: Peace Prospects in the Biden Era, by Doug Roche, 2020, 114 pp., is available from Amazon: \$9.99 Kindle and \$14.99 paperback.

Jim Creskey is the publisher of *The Hill Times*.

The Hill Times



Joe Biden and Doug Roche, pictured on Dec. 4, 2001, at the Friends Conference Center in Philadelphia for a conference addressing the implications of missile defence on the development and deployment of offensive weapons in space. Mr. Roche has dedicated his life to nuclear weapons disarmament with a passion that would wear out a 30 year old, writes Jim Creskey. Photograph courtesy of Jonathan Granoff