

AGAINST TRUMP, AND THE DEMOCRATIC MACHINE**Democrat Voters Did Not Want To Risk Voting For Bernie Sanders, But Joe Biden Is A Flawed Candidate**

At 11.30 on Monday morning, there was a queue of cars, two vehicles deep and several miles long, for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank in Duquesne, Pennsylvania, waiting for the two boxes of food offered when it opens at noon. Every week the lines get longer. Two days later, Bernie Sanders, the left-wing challenger for the Democratic presidential nomination, withdrew from the race and vowed to back the presumptive nominee, former Vice-President Joe Biden.

America on the edge

The coronavirus has made the case for universal health care, a welfare state and tackling inequalities in a manner that Mr. Sanders was unable to. Even before the pandemic struck, a significant portion of the country was on the brink: four in ten American adults could not withstand an unexpected \$400 expense. Now they have been pushed over the edge.

The trouble, for Mr. Sanders, is the lesson came too late and too few people believed that he was either capable of defeating President Donald Trump or getting his agenda through Congress or both. Put bluntly, in a moment when progressives believe American democracy is in peril at the hands of an egomaniacal right-wing demagogue, too many liberals thought it was too great a risk to stand a septuagenarian Jewish socialist from Vermont who had a heart attack six months earlier.

That concern was not entirely justified. Throughout February, Mr. Sanders led Mr. Trump in every poll by between 2% and 8%. The early States he performed well in — Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada — were all the kind of swing States Democrats need to win in November.

But the more he won among Democrats and threatened to break the mould the more those who had been set in that mould, insisted he would lose against Mr. Trump. The confidence in his unelectability sat somewhere between a script and an incantation, recited dutifully and earnestly by the media and political establishments, most of whom had insisted that Mr. Trump could never win the presidency.

If he won the nomination not only would he be running against Mr. Trump but the Democratic machine. After he won Nevada and it looked like no clear contender had yet emerged, Matt Bennett, of the moderate group, Third Way, told Politico: "It's this incredible sense that we're hurtling to the abyss. I also think we could lose the House. And if we do, there would be absolutely no way to stop [Trump]. Today is the most depressed I've ever been in politics."

Cornerstone constituency

There was no justification for this bed-wetting. But concerns about his electability were not entirely unjustified either. Despite considerable and concerted efforts, he failed to convince African Americans that his candidacy was viable. That is no small thing. African Americans are the cornerstone of the Democratic coalition: the party has only won the presidency with the white vote alone once — in 1964 — since the Second World War.

It was not his programme they did not like. African Americans were more likely to support universal health care and free college tuition than any other ethnic groups. It was either him or his capacity to achieve those goals, they were unconvinced by.

"I think African Americans, particularly older ones, have learned not to expect too much from Democratic politicians," explains Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, a Princeton professor in African American studies. "Because that's what they usually get."

His other key vulnerability was younger voters, who did back him — including, it should be noted, younger African Americans — but did not turn up in sufficient numbers to make a difference. Mr. Sanders had predicated his potential on his ability to change the electorate by galvanising non-voters. If they were not going to show up then a crucial part of his coalition would be missing.

In this sense, Mr. Sanders' precarity was, at its root, similar to that of his counterpart in the United Kingdom, the former left-wing leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn. Their ascent was disorganised. They did not emerge from a deeper movement seeking electoral representation that

could sustain them, but were, instead, the product of a broad, amorphous, alienated sentiment that sought electoral remedy through them but had no infrastructure to make that happen. Given his agenda, Mr. Sanders' appeal was considerable: but it did not take sufficient root beyond his base.

His prospects went south when the voting went South. The first state in the former Confederacy to vote, South Carolina, was the first in which the African American vote was decisive. Mr. Biden won handily. Democratic grandees would have settled for anyone but Mr. Sanders. The trouble is, until South Carolina, they did not have anyone.

As Mr. Biden rose, other centrist candidates — some of whom had been outperforming him — pulled out and endorsed him. After Super Tuesday, when, apart from the big prize of California, Mr. Sanders won little else, his candidacy was effectively over.

But the political questions it raised are more pertinent than ever. That line in Duquesne, which is more than five times bigger than it was at the start of the pandemic, illustrates the transformative nature of this crisis. The day after Mr. Sanders withdrew, unemployment rose by 6.6 million bringing the number who have lost their jobs in the last three weeks to 16 million. Recovering from the global economic depression, we are about to experience demands of a thoroughgoing structural alternative to neo-liberalism. That is what Mr. Sanders was suggesting: that is why the establishment was so desperate for him to lose.

On Biden

Clearly, that alternative is by no means the only scenario; Mr. Trump could win and things can get even worse.

But a Biden candidacy is by no means a risk-free proposition. Far from it. There is a reason why South Carolina was the first State he has won in the three times he has run for the presidency in 32 years (1988, 2008, 2020). At the best of times he is a terrible candidate. On the stump he rambles hopelessly, losing himself midsentence, wandering into rhetorical cul-de-sacs and is overly tactile with women. He told a crowd in Houston he was looking forward to Super Thursday and once confused his wife and his sister, who were both on the stage with him.

And these are not the best of times. The trouble is not just his performance but his politics. He was an enthusiastic backer of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Iraq war, deregulation and social security freezes, which does not leave him with much to take on Mr. Trump with.

And so it is that after three-and-a-half years that have seen the largest demonstrations in U.S. history, including two women's marches and a youth-led protest against gun control, we end up with a 77-year-old man who is to the right of Hillary Clinton.

Mr. Biden won the nomination by not being Sanders; but not being Trump may not be enough to seal the deal in November. A poll two weeks ago showed he attracted the lowest recorded amount of 'strong enthusiasm' among his own supporters for any Democratic presidential hopeful in the 20 years of polling. Mr. Trump's base remains fired up.

Coronavirus has made a volatile electorate and a fragile political culture even more unpredictable. Anything could happen. Both Mr. Biden and Mr. Sanders represented a risk. But Mr. Sanders was a risk worth taking; Mr. Biden is the risk we are now stuck with.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

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| 1. machine (noun) – organization, system, structure, machinery. | 4. vow (verb) – affirm, pledge, promise/swear, make a commitment. |
| 2. flawed (adjective) – weak, unsound, incorrect. | 5. back (verb) – support, endorse, uphold. |
| 3. left-wing (adjective) – socialist, communist, leftist, radical, liberal. | 6. presumptive (adjective) – probable, likely, prospective, assumed. |

7. **presumptive** (noun) – In United States presidential elections, the presumptive nominee is a **nominee** presidential candidate who is assumed to be their party's nominee, but has not yet been formally nominated or elected by their political party at the party's nominating convention.
8. **ontheedge (of)** (phrase) – on the brink of, on the verge of a situation; at a crucial or critical point.
9. **universalhealthcare (UHC)** (noun) – it refers to a health care system that provides health care and financial protection to all citizens of a particular country. It also means that all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship.
10. **inequality** (noun) – Inequality is simply defined as “the state of not being equal, especially in status, rights and opportunities; imbalance, unevenness, disproportion, disparity.
11. **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
12. **withstand** (verb) – bear, survive, live through, tolerate.
13. **push over the edge** (phrase) – to make someone feel so unhappy; to make someone feel so unhappy.
14. **get through** (phrasal verb) – be successful in, succeed in, come through.
15. **Congress** (noun) – The United States Congress is the bicameral (two chambers) legislature of the federal government of the United States, and consists of two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate.
16. **putbluntly** (phrase) – to say something in a direct and truthful manner (which may offend/upset someone).
17. **progressive** (noun) – leftist, left-winger, reformist, liberal.
18. **peril** (noun) – danger, jeopardy, risk/difficulty.
19. **at the hands of** (phrase) – as a consequence of actions (suffer, get hurt & be treated badly by someone).
20. **egomaniacal** (adjective) – egocentric, egoistic, selfish.
21. **right-wing** (adjective) – conservative, rightist, alt-right.
22. **demagogue** (noun) – a (political) leader in a democracy who gains popularity by exploiting emotions, prejudice and ignorance among the common people.
23. **septuagenarian** (adjective) – a person who is between 70 and 79 years old.
24. **mould** (noun) – structure, organization, formation.
25. **script** (noun) – a plan of action.
26. **incantation** (noun) – magic formula.
27. **recite** (verb) – repeat (from memory), quote, render; list/detail, itemize, say aloud.
28. **dutifully** (adverb) – obediently, conscientiously, responsibly.
29. **earnestly** (adverb) – seriously, sincerely, resolutely/firmly.
30. **the establishment** (noun) – the powers that be, the authorities, the regime (exercising power and influence).
31. **run against** (phrasal verb) – oppose, counter, deny.
32. **hurtle** (verb) – move, run, rush (in an uncontrolled manner).
33. **abyss** (noun) – a catastrophic/disastrous/awful situation.
34. **cornerstone** (noun) – focus/crux, fundamental principle, central component.
35. **bed-wetting** (noun) – In general, it is night-time urinary incontinence (also called as enuresis) under age six; figuratively, negative stereotype, stigma, shame.
36. **electability** (noun) – the capability of a candidate to be elected.
37. **considerable** (adjective) – significant, substantial, a lot of.
38. **concerted** (adjective) – coordinated, united, joint, collaborative.
39. **candidacy** (noun) – the state/condition/fact of being a candidate, particularly in an election; candidateship.
40. **viable** (adjective) – manageable, feasible, effective.
41. **ethnic** (adjective) – relating to a population subgroup (cultural, national,

- traditional/folk) with a common national or cultural tradition.
42. **vulnerability** (noun) – weakness/defencelessness, frailty, susceptibility.
43. **turn up** (phrasal verb) – arrive, attend, be present.
44. **make a difference** (phrase) – be important, have a significant effect on, to cause a change.
45. **potential** (noun) – prospects, possibilities, potentiality.
46. **electorate** (noun) – all the people who entitled to vote in an election.
47. **galvanise** (verb) – inspire, spur, encourage.
48. **show up** (phrasal verb) – appear, come out, turn up.
49. **precarity** (noun) – the state of being uncertain/insecure/unsafe.
50. **root** (noun) – source, origin, reason.
51. **counterpart** (noun) – a person/thing that serves the same job/function but in a different location; equivalent.
52. **ascent** (noun) – a rise to a higher (social) rank.
53. **disorganic** (adjective) – disorganized, disordered, confused.
54. **seek** (verb) – try, attempt, aim.
55. **sustain** (verb) – support, encourage, bolster, give strength to.
56. **amorphous** (adjective) – unstructured, indeterminate, formless/vague.
57. **alienated** (adjective) – isolated, estranged, detached.
58. **remedy** (noun) – solution, answer, antidote/panacea.
59. **decisive** (adjective) – resolute, firm, strong-minded, determined.
60. **handily** (adverb) – easily, without difficulty.
61. **centrist** (adjective) – a person whose political opinions are not extreme, falling between those of liberals and conservatives.
62. **outperform** (verb) – be better than.
63. **pull out** (phrasal verb) – withdraw, leave, abandon.
64. **endorse** (verb) – support, uphold, confirm, vindicate/validate.
65. **pertinent** (adjective) – relevant, appropriate, applicable.
66. **transformative** (adjective) – life-changing, metamorphic, progressive.
67. **depression** (noun) – slump, decline, downturn.
68. **thoroughgoing** (adjective) – extensive, widespread, detailed.
69. **neo-liberalism** (noun) – new/revived liberal principles.
70. **desperate** (adjective) – eager, desirous, crying out, in great need of, urgently requiring, in want of.
71. **by no means** (phrase) – not at all, in no way, certainly not.
72. **scenario** (noun) – course of events, situation.
73. **far from** (phrase) – not, not at all, nowhere near.
74. **at the best of times** (phrase) – in the most advantageous situations.
75. **on the stump** (phrase) – take part in campaign for election.
76. **ramble** (verb) – talk confusedly.
77. **mid-sentence** (adverb) – in the middle of a sentence.
78. **rhetorical** (adjective) – bombastic, oratorical, overblown/extravagant.
79. **cul-de-sacs** (noun) – a condition/situation that leads nowhere; dead end. French, literally meaning 'bottom of a sack'.
80. **overly** (adverb) – unduly, inordinately, immoderately, excessively.
81. **tactile** (noun) – being the sense of touch, perceptible by touch, tangible.
82. **backer** (noun) – supporter, upholder, defender.
83. **deregulation** (noun) – the removal of regulations.
84. **freeze** (noun) – suspension; hold, fixed (at a specific level).
85. **take on** (phrasal verb) – compete against, oppose, challenge/confront, fight.
86. **end up** (verb) – come/appear, find oneself (to a particular course of action in the end).
87. **hopeful** (noun) – a person who likely to succeed.
88. **fire up** (phrasal verb) – arouse, energize, activate, motivate.
89. **volatile** (adjective) – unpredictable, changeable, variable, inconstant.

90. **fragile** (adjective) – weak, shaky/risky, unreliable, insubstantial, feeble/unsound.
91. **stick with** (verb) – not able to escape from.