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What Does the Left Owe Party Politics?



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

One of the political disputes dividing not-Republicans in the U.S. that doesn't seem to be going away is over the history and ongoing role of the Democratic Party in American politics. For every person who sees the world divided into Red and Blue traffic circles, a domestic Cold War if you will, there are many more who see the entire Party enterprise as a power-grift that stands between we humans and functioning democracy. That 'not Trump' was just elected, but that Joe Biden will be assuming the role of president, promises to reorganize a few thought processes around what 'not Trump' really means. Of course, there was full disclosure regarding what Uncle Joe spent the prior half-century doing, wasn't there?

On the policy front, with Mr. Biden self-consigned to ‘saving America’s soul’ as the Covid-19 Depression takes root, those stuck in the corporeal world would be advised to begin reserving pitchforks. With Team Blue’s ACA (Affordable Care Act) tucked into Mr. Biden’s trousers, one might imagine that healthcare outcomes were on the mend before the onset of Covid-19. Alas, even with the end of the ‘pre-existing conditions’ exclusion, there were ‘existing conditions’ left to consider. On this front, healthcare outcomes were on a [downward trajectory](#) in the U.S. even with the thing that is tucked into Mr. Biden’s trousers. On the bright side (not), Americans are killing themselves at the highest rate amongst rich countries. Lest this come as news, want motivates people to be their better selves. That this philosophy has freed the blessed few, a.k.a. the capitalist class, from want suggests that ‘saving America’s soul’ will require a wee transfer of the material from up on high to down below, for the sake of them what has it. This has to be the meaning of Mr. Biden’s election, else how could just one more activist for the Reagan / Thatcher project follow so closely in time/space the purge of the gold toilet crowd? That Mr. Biden spent his adult life [paying homage to Uncle Ron](#), and by his contributions to the 1994 Crime Bill and the Patriot Act should have a scarlet ‘F(ascist)’ attached to his person, suggests that there are at least several shades of scarlet. More on this below.

In this regard, I no doubt depart from the consensus on such matters. For while the soon-to-be-ex-president gave it the old Proud Boy try, he lacked the stick-to-it-iveness needed to provide a few million poor people with free room and board in a carceral facility while boosting the tech economy with the latest in surveillance technology. As an innovator, Mr. Biden promoted open (cell door) government with [secret laws prosecuted in secret courts using secret evidence](#), in secret! And while the Patriot Act has all of the hallmarks of the ‘F’ word, and while yes, Joe Biden ‘managed’ its translation from waking nightmare into police-state classic, he did so with the working-class panache that makes him a person of the [people who like police state powers](#).

The last administration premised in what it wasn’t—that was [‘about nothing](#),’ was George W. Bush’s, which was plucked from obscurity when the pretext for a war that it wanted was handed to it by the relatives of the [people positioned to profit from it](#). Those wary of Mr. Biden’s neocon proclivities in this regard have good reason: Mr. Biden was pushing for war against Iraq [five full years before](#) Mr. Bush took office. He simply lied about the effort during the presidential campaign. Of course, the Iraqis who were killed, or who saw their families, friends and communities destroyed in the Iraq War, know that Mr. Biden had their backs. His were ‘soul of the nation’ deaths, not the horrible Red kind.

With this not-kindness toward Mr. Biden’s life’s work, the question of balance [has been raised](#). With Supreme Court seats to be allotted, and the fate of various and sundry ‘little people’ at stake in the micro-machinations of empire, how can the self-evident lesser-evilness of the Democrats not force the political calculus in a Blueish direction, goes the question?

Having begun my political education opposing the Vietnam War, it was LBJ's war for the decade before it became Nixon's war. It was Jimmy Carter who launched Reaganism. Bill Clinton was the most effective Republican president in modern history. And Barack Obama had both a mandate and the opportunity to change direction, but he didn't. Team Blue—I'm not convinced.

Much as Jimmy Carter was the transitional figure from the post-WWII period to the GFC (Global Financial Crisis) and the Great Recession, Barack Obama was the transitional figure from the Great Recession to the bleak and declining present. Yanis Varifoukis does a good job with the post-2009 transition [here](#). Had Mr. Obama simply not rescued the speculative side of Wall Street, he could have engineered a robust economic recovery while redirecting the West away from economic activity based in financial speculation. This would have limited the power of capital to resist the economic and environmental programs needed to save the people of the world from [impending environmental calamity](#).

For those lucky enough to equate ignorance with bliss, Private Equity is the gateway drug to everything wicked and evil in the modern bourgeois-plus world. Private equity unites 'investors' with war profiteering, infrastructure profiteering, healthcare profiteering, charter school profiteering, ad infinitum. Private equity is a financial creation. In 2009, Wall Street was flat on its back. It was *the* opportunity for a bloodless revolution for the benefit of humanity. Instead, Mr. Obama sided with the rich white guys in suits who created the mess to actively screw over much of the rest of Western humanity. Any Republican in power would have done the same. But had a Republican done what Mr. Obama did, a revolution would have ensued.

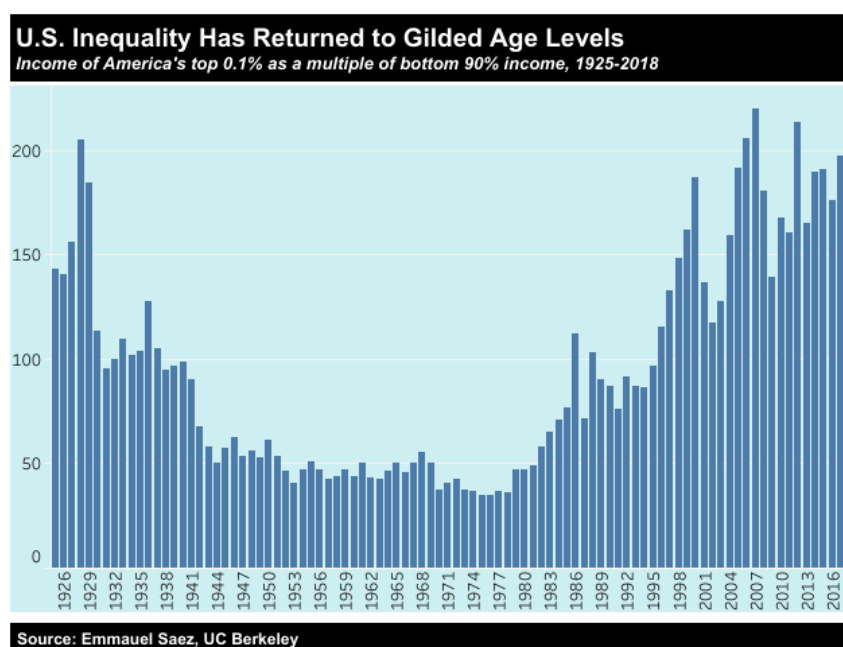
In this context, much of the pushback against Donald Trump came from the classes, enterprises and factions that benefited from the Democrats' rescue of Wall Street. This does not mean that Mr. Trump shouldn't have been taken to task for his illiberal blather, thinly considered policies and poor personnel choices. But the public figure who saved financial capitalism, and who ushered in the neoliberal hellscape that now stands before us, is Barack Obama. There is a reason why the CIA, NSA, FBI and national security and surveillance state establishments wanted to restore Democrats to power. They want to keep the imperial war machine humming. And Wall Street is the mechanism needed to affect quiet coups abroad.

The narrow point is that it is logically possible to perceive Donald Trump as the caricature of the ugly American that he is, and disagree with most of his policies, while seeing the Wall Street—national security—surveillance—military industrial complex, as the larger, more persistent, and ultimately more powerful, problem. Another way to put this is that if you think that Donald Trump ranks near the top of the list of devils, you don't know what country you are living in.

The larger point is that the demonization of Trump was a play from power, for power. Drive across upstate New York and you see the confederate flags that he inspired. Get to know the

people flying them, and 1) they aren't acting from power, but rather a desperate sense of powerlessness, and 2) Democrats were the more effective front group for the neoliberal deindustrialization that made these people hate their lives.

The conspicuous class-loathing that was the initial bourgeois-PMC response to Mr. Trump's election was by and for the relatively small group of people that exited Barack Obama's tenure in the White House richer than they entered it. The seventy-plus percent who were worse off weren't so because of their own moral failings. The U.S. is five decades into planned deindustrialization, the purposeful immiseration of the great American working class. It was Bill Clinton who passed NAFTA after the Republicans couldn't get it through. And even after Donald Trump was elected, Barack 'let them eat organic, gluten free, cake' Obama was playing the D.C. insider's game of pushing the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership).



Graph: From the depths of the Great Recession, Barack Obama recovered the Gilded Age for the rich and the American bourgeois, while leaving the rest of the country to its own devices. While the forces driving the concentration of wealth preceded Mr. Obama, he had an opportunity to point the economy in a different direction and he chose not to. Source: inequality.org.

The D.C. Democrats' answer to the refusal of working class voters to accede to their 2016 presidential candidate was Russiagate. Rather than opposing Mr. Trump's policies, which the D.C. Dems didn't find all that objectionable, the so-called intelligence agencies used their propaganda distribution channels at the New York Times and the Washington Post to non-stop plant fake news stories that always, without variation, listed CIA / Atlantic Council / NSA apparatchiks as sources at the bottom of articles that proclaimed in their headlines that they were based on evidence. The predictable result was lunatic bloviation that somehow

\$75,000 worth of internet ads spent mostly after the 2016 election were ‘worse than the attack on Pearl Harbor.’

To sum this up, the Democrats’ response to Donald Trump was to pass his political program, largely without comment; to concentrate additional powers in the Office of the President while Mr. Trump held the position; and to make reckless, apparently unfounded, charges that elevated political tensions between two nuclear armed powers, all because they were so politically inept that they couldn’t win an election against Donald effing Trump. Now, after [rigging a second primary against Bernie Sanders](#) and hiding their candidate in a windowless basement for ten months hoping that a pandemic would cause enough death, despair, and misery to make their candidate viable, their candidate— not-Trump, was elected leaving 98%+ of the people who voted for him to learn who Uncle Joe is on the fly. How is this going to work?

The fundamental paradox of power— that the last people who should hold it are the people who want it, suggests that picking around the edges of Party politics is a low probability method of affecting meaningful political outcomes. This isn’t an argument against doing so. [Those who heed the call](#) should work away on Supreme Court choices and opportunities to shift budgets this way or that. Rumor had it that Hillary Clinton’s [Supreme Court pick](#) to replace Antonin Scalia, had she won the 2016 election, was Texas Republican Wallace Jefferson. Hell, even Klaus Barbie, the Butcher of Lyon, [found his way onto the payroll of the U.S. military](#). So there is good work to be done close to power.

The point regarding Mr. Barbie isn’t just a cheap shot. It is that and so much more. The neoliberal program that arose in the aftermath of WWII, which produced the Chicago School of economics, a tortured and implausible, but ‘American,’ philosophy of science, and an anti-communist liberalism that formed the institutional core of the American Left, was intended to produce an historical break with American slavery, genocide and eugenics, which had also been the racialized center of the Nazi program. As irony had it, it was combined with realpolitik that brought much of the senior Nazi leadership to work in leadership roles in the American project from that point forward.

The sources for these charges are the [CIA](#), [CIA](#), the [New York Times](#) and [DemocracyNow!](#) Operation Paperclip brought [1,600 Nazi scientists](#) to the U.S. to work in defense and commerce. Other programs run by the OSS, which became the CIA, and the CIC, placed hundreds, probably thousands, of former Nazi leaders in American political and spy operations in South America and Europe. Klaus Barbie was [reportedly working for the CIA](#) in Bolivia when Che Guevara was captured, and later killed. And the [Americans took over the Nazi Concentration Camp system](#) and kept it running, filled with ‘communists,’ for years after the end of WWII. The point: it wasn’t just realpolitik— an alliance of convenience, that made the integration of the Nazi leadership into American politics, science, and culture a successful fit. This is what America is.

So, when Joe Biden mumbles less-than-well-considered-cow-manure about ‘restoring the soul of America,’ it is important to understand that he was a key architect of George W. Bush’s war against Iraq that killed somewhere between 500,000 – three million Iraqis. He signed off on counterinsurgency operations that came (factually) straight from the Nazi SS playbook. Mr. Biden gladly and willfully wrote and enacted laws that put several million poor people through the mass incarceration system. And Mr. Biden commissioned the writing of the Patriot Act that is being used to shut down dissenting views on the internet. To the extent that the term has descriptive value, Joe Biden is a fascist.

The two stories from the Iraq War that stuck with me were reported in the news. I have no way of confirming or disproving them. The first was of a girl who was about twelve years old. She was murdered, her head was cut off, and a dog’s head was sewn onto her body. She was left in this condition for her family to find. The reported motive was sectarian animosity unleashed by the war. The second was of a boy who was being held in a CIA prison. (Males over the age of twelve were classified as enemy combatants). A hole was drilled through his hands and they were bolted together. The reported purpose was so that he could be raped by the prison guards more easily. Whether these stories are true, or are metaphors for the horrors that war unleashes, I don’t know.

There are devils in this world. The people who launch wars are devils. There are also political calculations that sometimes need to be made. But this isn’t one of them. Do I owe this guy a vote? I’ll save the obscenities for when we meet.

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