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## *Biden's Dog Day Afternoon*



Photograph Source: Warner Bros.

If the presidential race were a hostage situation—as it must seem to most voters—President Joe Biden would be barricaded inside a bank or maybe the White House, telling negotiators (think of the editorial board of the *New York Times* or perhaps Senate hopeful Adam Schiff, each pleading into a bullhorn): “I ain’t coming out.”

The “situation” began with the recent CNN debate during which—to the Muzak of non-stop Donald Trump lying—President Biden slurred his words, re-ordered his sentences, and misplaced his modifiers to the point that large cross-sections of voters came to the conclusion that the president has lost the thread of the American conversation.

Dutifully, a phalanx of Democratic operatives and concerned citizens (not to mention the commentariat from late-night television and the headline writers at the *New York Post*) lined up to announce that Biden was mentally unfit for the top job and should cede his

party's nomination to someone else in the thin gray Democratic line. (The *Post* headlines read: "JUST SAD...OFF HIS CLOCKER...NOW THEY TELL US...OVER MY DEAD BODY!")

For the most part, the Democratic hierarchs spoke only in the subjunctive case. Biden whisperer Representative Jim Clyburn said about Vice President Kamala Harris, covering every base:

I will support her, if he were to step aside, but I'm going to support her going forward and sometime in the future. I want this ticket to continue to be Biden-Harris. And then we will see what happens after the next election.

When Biden didn't respond to the intervention's gentle persuasions ("*I promise you, at the next debate, both you and Mr. Trump can hit a few golf balls, but right now I want you off the ticket...*"), the EMT Democrats sent Biden to the studio sanatorium of the acclaimed Dr. George Stephanopoulos (a noted television psychiatrist who specializes in delusional presidential behavior) on the hope that he could nudge Joe off the ledge. Stephanopoulos asked:

And you have been doing that and the American people have been watching, yet their concerns about your age and your health are growing. So that's why I'm asking — to reassure them, would you be willing to have the independent medical evaluation?

When Biden refused to drink such prime-time Kool-Aid, Stephanopoulos tried again, asking: "I understand that. I understand that's why you want to stay in the race, but have you convinced yourself that only you can defeat him?"

To which Biden responded: "I convinced myself of two things. I'm the most qualified person to beat him, and I know how to get things done."

Had Biden had one of Hunter's illegal handguns, at this point in the ABC interview he would have put a few warning shots into the studio ceiling, just to emphasize he isn't prepared to "go quietly".

I am a little surprised Stephanopoulos didn't have to say to Biden (from *Dog Day Afternoon*): "Joe, Wyoming, that's not a country."

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One reason why Joe Biden can get away with flipping off the Democratic establishment is because in 2020 he took out nomination insurance in the form of his vice president, Kamala Harris, who at this point might lose an election to None of the Above, and would surely to Donald Trump (despite all those upbeat polls that her staff have leaked to the press).

Biden picked her as his running mate in 2020 only because she had been a friend of his late son, Beau (and who knows, maybe Biden thought Kamala as vice president might be able to persuade his twin Hunter to go on the wagon).

My personal take is that in the last ten years or so, Biden's full-time job has been that of taking 1-800 calls on the Hunter hotline while his son has peddled influence for the Russians, Ukrainians, and Chinese, had affairs with strippers and his brother's widow, and forgotten to keep track of the AppleCare plan on his laptop.

For Joe, being president or vice president has come second to dealing with this never-ending family tragedy, which could well explain why as his running mate in 2020 he picked someone he hardly knew and probably didn't like, based on a spiritual connection with his departed "good" son.

As it turned out, Harris's polling numbers were generous in 2020 when she dropped out of the presidential race with a 2% approval rating.

For whatever reasons, few people in Biden's circle—perhaps taking a clue from the president's body language?—seem to get along with Veep Harris (*"Did the president call?"*).

Clearly they find her prickly, not very smart, inefficient, prolix, a complainer, unpleasant in the sandbox, and endlessly scheming with her California donor circle to keep Governor Gavin Newsom from becoming Biden's political heir.

\* \* \*

Plus Biden can thank Harris for making a mess of immigration and giving Donald Trump an issue the size of the south Texas border on which to campaign against the president.

At every Trump rally, there is this imagery, as Trump emphasized in the recent presidential debate:

We have a border that's the most dangerous place anywhere in the world – considered the most dangerous place anywhere in the world. And he opened it up, and these killers are coming into our country, and they are raping and killing women. And it's a terrible thing....

He decided to open up our border, open up our country to people that are from prisons, people that are from mental institutions, insane asylum, terrorists. We have the largest number of terrorists coming into our country right now. All terrorists, all over the world – not just in South America, all over the world. They come from the Middle East, everywhere. All over the world, they're pouring in. And this guy just left it open.

Keep in mind that in 2021, Biden gave Harris the immigration portfolio, which she mangled by not actually visiting the border and giving a disastrous interview with NBC's Lester Holt (as reported by *The Hill*):

"At some point, you know, we are going to the border," Harris told Holt when asked if she plans to visit the border. "We've been to the border. So this whole thing about the border. We've been to the border. We've been to the border."

"You haven't been to the border," Holt responded.

"And I haven't been to Europe," she replied. "And I mean, I don't ... understand the point that you're making. I'm not discounting the importance of the border."

Instead Harris went to Guatemala, where she had this advice for those trekking north: "Do not come, do not come." But as President John F. Kennedy liked to tell his aides, quoting from World War II slang: "There is always some son-of-a-bitch who doesn't get the word."

\* \* \*

Another reason why Biden can hold the country hostage ("*I don't think anybody's more qualified to be President or win this race than me...*") is that the Democratic party has little time for democracy. As he said when making his ransom demands on *Morning Joe*: "I am not going anywhere." I am a little surprised he didn't quote Harrison Ford and say: "Get off my plane!"

In the 2024 primaries, with the blessings of all senior Democrats, Biden ran virtually unopposed (except for the self-funded Representative Dean Phillips and faith healer Marianne Williamson) and won all but 43 delegates, of the 3,939 that were up for grabs. By contrast, Phillips won 4 delegates, before dropping out of the race in March 2024.

Biden likes to remind his hostage negotiators that he got more than 14 million votes in the primaries, which to him anyway suggests a broad Democratic mandate. But even running unopposed Biden still received the votes of less than 30% of all registered Democrats.

Overall, Biden won 87% of the popular votes cast in the primaries. (For a comparison, note that in 2024 Vladimir Putin won his election by the same margin, pulling down 88% of Russian votes cast.) In the Republican primaries, Donald Trump won 76% of the votes cast, which suggests that even without more pronouncements from the Supreme Court, democracy might well be on its last legs.

Biden's delegates are required to vote for him on the first ballot at the Democratic convention. No wonder that to those now calling for his withdrawal from the race he can

preen (as he did on *Morning Joe*): "Any of these guys that don't think I should run: run against me. Announce for president. Challenge me at the convention."

When the Soviet leader Josef Stalin uttered a similar phrase, it came out: "The Pope! How many divisions has he got?"

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What started out as *Dog Day Afternoon* (all those film crews staking out the Biden family's crisis conference) has evolved into something closer to *Take the Money and Run*, with Joe Biden reprising the role of Virgil Starkwell—uttering such non-sequiturs as "Nobody wears beige to a bank robbery!" but still demanding cash in a bag.

Essentially Biden has called out the chattering class and Democratic establishment that were wondering out loud about his mental competence, and dared them to "do something about it," knowing that come the Chicago convention in August he will be the Democratic nominee, come hell, high water, or a few more thousand-yard stares.

Even though it is stating the obvious to acknowledge that Biden is politically dead on arrival, nearly all senior Democrats have now fallen into lockstep on his suitability to govern the country for the next four years, even when he would be turning age 86 while still in office.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said: "As I have said before, I'm with Joe." Coming to his senses, Representative Clyburn rhymed: "We are ridin' with Biden." Others sang from the same hymnal, including a few who after the crash-and-burn debate were saying that Biden could not walk and chew gum at the same time.

Perhaps most surprising of all, unless you chalk it up to Stockholm Syndrome playing out on a Queens street corner, were the gushing words of Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who said: "The matter is closed. He had reiterated that this morning. He has reiterated that to the public. Joe Biden is our nominee. He is not leaving this race. He is in this race, and I support him."

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Is anyone surprised that the Democrats are the Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight? In 2000, the candidate Al Gore campaign sent Boy Scout lawyer Warren Christopher to the knife-fight recount in Florida and came away with eight years of George W. Bush.

In 2008, the Dems fell into the raptures over a first term senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, who sang songs of himself while delivering the Supreme Court to the far right, Congress to the Tea Party, and the Middle East to more forever wars.

Plus Obama's succession plan turned out to be a hydra-headed combination of Hillary Clinton and the same Joe Biden ("*I have a gub...*"), both of whom—if this form holds—will have the distinction of losing the presidency to convicted felon, adjudicated rapist, confidence huckster, and serial deadbeat, Donald Trump.

Heck of a job, Joey.

*Matthew Stevenson is the author of many books, including [Reading the Rails](#), [Appalachia Spring](#), and [The Revolution as a Dinner Party](#), about China throughout its turbulent twentieth century. His most recent books are [Biking with Bismarck](#) and [Our Man in Iran](#). Out now: [Donald Trump's Circus Maximus and Joe Biden's Excellent Adventure](#), about the 2016 and 2020 elections.*

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