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## **A Perspective of Discontent: an Open Letter to Democrats**



Photograph Source: The White House – Public Domain

Ever since Trump's electoral victory in November 2024 I have been receiving multiple daily solicitations for funds to support the Democratic Party, individual Democratic candidates for Congress or State Offices, and notification of worthy campaigns on public issues such as the protection of Social Security, Medicare, and reproductive rights, as well as on voter protection in various forms. I am personally sympathetic with resistance to this perverse Republican effort to dismantle democracy and constitutional governance in the United States by taking giant steps toward legitimating autocratic rule with fascist features.

I expect many will be critical of what I write here as a diversion from attacking the main targets of concern: a White House dangerously out of control, a subjugated Republican Congressional presence, and a Supreme Court that subscribes to the subversive Trump ethos

90% of the time and is due to be further ‘packed’ in coming years. My response: failure calls for self-criticism, and criticism from an ally can be restorative, at least indirectly.

### **Funding Entrapment Techniques**

Against this background, I find myself increasingly alienated by procedural and substantive aspects of the chosen approach being taken by the Democratic Party leadership to oppose such an undesirable and dangerous set of developments in the governance of the country. On procedural issues, besides crudely reducing electoral politics to matters of raising money for electoral campaigns, giving the impression that democratic politics is little more than a continuous funding appeal. This is the overt posture of the Democratic Party establishment. I find this turn from ideas to money deeply distressing.

It lends itself to ultra-manipulative fundraising tactics. This outlook employs a variety of techniques to induce presumed liberal voters to take an opinion survey by responding to simplistic, almost rhetorical, questions about the Trump agenda and a preferred Democratic alternative. Not a word is mentioned that the survey is a sleeper leadup to a mandatory monetary contribution in which the survey respondent is given only a choice of what amount will be contributed. Clearly a funding entrapment mechanism. After taking time to answer a series of questions, there is no way to submit a completed survey without committing to a specific campaign contribution.

The choice foisted upon an innocent respondent is to pay or abort the survey. This technique exhibits a mentality of deception that more and more dominates bipartisan relations of the two political parties with their own followers, and of course with the citizenry as a whole. And not only in relation to electoral politics but across the board of public concerns. To restore trust and animate robust activism the Democratic Party needs to cultivate reasoned honesty, however radical, and abandon its present style of hysterical rhetoric pretending either that all is won or everything lost by outcomes in the political sphere. Political prospects are bleak enough without resorting to hollow exaggerations that annoy rather than motivate.

### **An Escapist Nationalist Policy Agenda**

If anything, my substantive objections are more serious and raise my concerns to such a level of disillusionment that I am teetering on the brink of withdrawing support, financial and otherwise, from the Democratic Party. I am appalled that the Democratic establishment continues to adopt a posture of total silence with regard to US foreign policy, which encourages an interpretation of implied unconditional support for Israel despite its transparent and prolonged Gaza genocide. Such criminality itself thinly disguises Israel’s territorial objectives that depend upon coerced ethnic cleansing of Gaza and the West Bank.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu's censure of those who stayed on the sidelines in the struggle against South African apartheid is surely applicable here: "It is my conviction that if we are neutral in situations of injustice, we have chosen the side of the oppressor." To be **silent** is more morally tone deaf than to be **neutral**. It was Kamala Harris's silence on hot issues, including but not limited to Gaza, that quite likely led to Trump's victory last November and certainly undermined her leadership credibility for the future. To play it safe to avoid controversy amounts to the self-neutering of political identity that has long plagued liberal politics by being shamelessly **pragmatic** rather than **principled** when it comes to the hard issues that have arisen over the years in US foreign policy. If Harris had expressed either measured and informed opposition to Israel's policies or even venture her own Biden-free rationale for continuity of US policy in the Middle East, she would have earned respect rather than scorn. If she had not distanced herself from controversy during her campaign for the presidency, she might now be heading a revitalized opposition rather than feebly mending fences with a stunned public helplessly watching de-democratization proceed daily without an energizing sense of credibly fighting back.

This unseemly silence by the Democratic Party leadership and liberal media on Israel/Palestine extends to foreign policy in general. Outsiders perceive an America that wants to run the world and is willing to pay the price of doing so but is indifferent to how or why. To be disappointed by Trump **only** because of his wrecking ball approach to a liberal domestic agenda while overlooking global issues is beyond misleading – it verges on insanity given the nature of the global challenges. It means indifference to the UN, the diplomacy of war and peace, foreign aid, relations with China, nuclear disarmament, and support for international law. Its willed blindness considerably outdoes the monkey that sees no evil!

If Trump is subtly attacked for building walls, not bridges, the Democrats are not far behind. It is hard to reconcile this inward turn with their overwhelming support for a huge 'peacetime' budget to fund the military while the poor at home suffer and the infrastructure rots. It is hard to explain the disparity between this huge investment in the world that the global imperialists in Washington of both political parties dream about and pursuit of humane forms of sustainable governance that the leaders of the Democratic Party should be championing to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges at home and internationally. Among the mistakes being made is to suppose that a costly hegemonic foreign policy can be divorced from a supposed dedication to domestic priorities. The Democratic Party seems intent on promoting such a divorce, which invites a deep misunderstanding of the linkages between disappointment at home and running the world by reliance on a militarized geopolitics.

To explain my discomfort with this presumed disinterest of US voters in anything beyond their borders and to show that I was not overstating this mood of apparent contentment with a walled in America, I list the issues selected in a typical recent funding appeal by the Democratic Party that polls Democrats about their main concerns as a prelude to a funding appeal. The only issue on this list that might justify inclusion in a foreign policy agenda is ‘addressing the climate crisis.’ Even climate concerns so described might be understood as no less domestic than the others given its wording, differing from Trump only with respect to not dismissing global warming as a hoax. The list below is in the exact language used in official Democratic Party appeal text:

*Which of the following best describes why you support Democrats? (Select all that apply.)*

I believe in addressing the climate crisis.

I believe in creating more good-paying jobs and supporting unions.

I believe in reproductive freedom.

I believe in affordable health care.

I believe in protecting and expanding rights for the LGBTQ+ community.

I believe in protecting Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

I believe in protecting democracy and the right to vote.

I believe in moving our country forward, not backward.

I believe in protecting critical federal services for working people, veterans, children, and the elderly.

I believe in strong, stable leadership.

All of the above

Other

### **Concluding Remark**

My final assessment of this recipe for despair is that without a revitalized internationalism, America’s prospects are dismal at home as well in the world. Unless the Democratic Party reconstitutes itself with a sense of urgency the nation’s future will remain under a darkening sky. To restore hope that is not a cover for ‘wishful thinking’ requires reconnecting what we wish for at home with what we do abroad. Without adding demilitarization and denuclearization to the policy agenda the challenges facing the country and the world will continue to be misconceived. Without dedication to the prevention of and opposition to genocide, apartheid, and ecocide, prospects for cooperative problem-solving in multilateral venues will not be forthcoming. As well, without a stronger United Nations that rejects the

primacy of geopolitics, any hopes for humane global governance, let alone war prevention, will be in vain.

Perhaps it is too much to wish, but in the spirit of ‘a politics of impossibility’ I would like to believe that the leaders of the Democratic Party are still capable of listening to voices of disillusionment. Revisions of messaging to the faithful is only the tip of the iceberg. The underlying challenge is to make opposition to Trump turn on a transformational vision of how to frame political and economic agendas for a brighter future at home and abroad.

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