

The Nevada Caucus and the Desperation of Democrat Elites

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Global Research, February 25, 2020

Region: [USA](#)
Theme: [History](#)

The events of the past week—beginning with the TV debates of the candidates on February 19 and culminating in the Nevada Democrat Party caucus in Nevada on February 22 this past Saturday—show a growing desperation in the ranks of the Democratic Party’s corporate-driven leadership as the Sanders campaign has assumed a clear lead in the race for the Democratic Party nomination.

Having ascended in the late 1980s to a controlling role of the party through the Democrat Leadership Conference (DLC) faction, the Democratic party’s leadership now sees itself at a critical juncture. If it has not yet crossed the political ‘Rubicon’, it at least has arrived at its opposite shore and is preparing to do so.

The choice the leadership faces is whether to transform itself into a Trump-like party, openly run by oligarchs and billionaires; or to return to a pre-1990 Democrat party—before the DLC faction takeover—and allow **Bernie Sanders** to become its presidential candidate.

The party leadership’s current actions clearly show it now leans heavily toward the former. Its plan is to unite itself around Bloomberg, rather than return to former, more democratic roots with Sanders.

In the worst case scenario, some of the wealthiest of the Democrat Party’s backers—like former Goldman Sachs CEO, Lloyd Blankfein (a big financial backer of Hillary and Obama campaigns)—are even suggesting a third way. They have begun to say privately, and even publicly, they would vote for Trump instead of Sanders in November. They’ve done that before: When progressive grass roots forces coalesced around the party’s nominee, George McGovern, in 1972 and the leadership turned to support Richard Nixon. And before that in 1956 to some extent, when Adlai Stevenson was the nominee.

In other words, there’s a long standing history in the Democratic Party of the corporate wing sabotaging its candidate in a presidential election by supporting the Republican party’s candidate, either indirectly or directly.

Democrat Party As Indicator of Political Crisis

Just as the traditional Republican party imploded in 2016 and thereafter became the Party of Trump—so too is a similar fundamental transformation now underway in the Democrat party.

It was a grass roots social movement that enabled the Republican party’s transformation. It’s no less a grass roots movement in the Democrat party today driving the transformation, the final outcome yet to be determined. And in both cases, Democrat party leaders were

(and are) unable to understand movement dynamics: in 2016 they couldn't understand (or predict) why Trump won. And today, in 2020, they can't understand how and why Sanders is gaining growing support within their party's ranks.

Just take a look at the Democratic Party at present: Neither of the leading candidates to date are really 'Democrats': there's Bernie Sanders, the independent running under the banner of the Democrat Party; and there's Mike Bloomberg, a republican billionaire running in the primaries after having 'bought his way into' the debates and primaries by contributing tens of millions of dollars to the Democrat National Committee (DNC). The DNC was more than glad to change the rules to allow Bloomberg to jump into the middle of the pack in exchange for Bloomberg's millions in last minute party contributions

As Joe Biden, the prior 'chase one' has faded, and continues to fade, the DNC-corporate moneybag wing of the party has clearly opted for Mike Bloomberg. And, at the same time, are intensifying their attacks on Sanders.

The Sanders vs. Bloomberg contest represents the fundamental contest in the primaries. The rest is overlay. That primary two-candidate contest will become even clearer after Super Tuesday primaries are concluded in early March. And by the end of March, the lesser candidates will have been effectively cleared from the field.

What all this represents is a collapse of the traditional Democratic party center, in favor of the two 'outliers' (Sanders & Bloomberg). The 'outlier effect' in turn reflects the fact that voters have little confidence in the leaderships' various centrist choices to date—i.e. Biden, Buttigieg, Klobuchar, etc. The voters have lost confidence in the leadership's political proposals and programs—i.e. the policies that have been pushed and promoted by the corporate wing for the past three decades since the late 1980s, when the corporate wing rallied around the faction called the Democratic Leadership Caucus (DLC) and took over the party and its policies.

Those policies pushed free trade treaties, allowed Reagan-George W. Bush multi-trillion dollar corporate-investor tax cuts to continue, bailed out bankers but not Main St. after 2009, refused to restore Union rights in organizing and bargaining, offered token minimalist market solutions to the healthcare crisis, allowed the government to rip off students by imposing interest rates on student loans even higher than private lenders, allowed pensions and retirement security to collapse, provided a tepid response to police brutality, failed to stop widespread Republican gerrymandering and voter suppression at the states level that's given Trump and the radical right a near 'lock-hold' on the so-called red states in national elections. That's just a short list.

Voters sense that these neoliberal policies of the mainstream Democrat party leadership have not, and cannot, reverse or resolve the growing economic—and now political—crises now deepening within the core of America.

The 'Get Sanders' Party Leadership Response

As the party leaders' former favorite, Joe Biden, fades at the polls and in the primaries, party campaign operatives—both former and current—are now being unleashed by party leaders to go after Sanders with gusto.

Meanwhile, across the country, more local party officials (mayors, party brokers, state

legislators, governors, i.e. those folks comprising the majority of the so-called Special Delegates to the Democrat Party Convention) are busy increasingly endorsing publicly Bloomberg.

The 'Get Sanders' crowd includes some of the big names of the corporate wing of the party:

There's Obama, who is already allowing his image and statements to be used by Bloomberg in his political ads (now totaling more than \$450 million as of mid-February 2020). Expect Obama to come out more directly against Sanders soon, likely right after Super Tuesday or even before. There's the Clintonites, from Hillary to hack hatched man, James Carville, former key campaign advisor to Bill, whose anti-Sanders slander is also rising. (Watch Bill to stumble along in Hillary's wake as well, once Obama comes out publicly directly opposing Sanders in the next few weeks).

Then there's the analogue to Fox News on the Trump-Republican right—the TV news channel MSNBC (sometimes called MSDNC)—that has been escalating its anti-Sanders commentary. Its star talk show host, Chris Mathews, recently declared Sanders' win in the Nevada Caucus is similar to the Nazi conquest of France in 1940. The Mathews remark has released a flood of criticism from not only the Sanders organization, but the middle ranks of the party and independents as well, who point out that Sanders' family members were actually murdered in the Nazi holocaust.

On the print news side, not to be forgotten, is the New York Times' editorial page that is filled almost daily now with anti-Sanders' screeds by writers Douthout, Leonhardt, Krugman and others.

Mathews, Hillary, Carville, the NY Times' mouthpieces, and a growing crescendo of other Sanders slanderers together represent the forward scouting parties being sent under cover across the 'political Rubicon' early, in order to lay the land mines designed to implode rational public opinion and discussion of Sanders' programs and proposals. They're there, behind the lines, to prepare the main assault by the Democratic Party moneybags and leaders, as they deliberate when and where to best cross the river in force.

A new anti-Sanders theme launched this past week was the statement by the US intelligence bureaucracy that the Russians new prime target is to support Sanders. Russian interference in the 2020 elections thus will focus on Sanders. Somehow, the media spin goes, that's supposed to help Trump get elected. The argument being that Sanders will be the easiest candidate for Trump to defeat. But it's an argument that fails to acknowledge that in various national polls, Sanders leads Trump by 49% to 45%, while all other Democrat candidates are either tied with Trump or losing to Trump!

Most important here, the 'Russia favors Sanders' slander is backed by no evidence whatsoever from US intelligence sources. It's just a leaked opinion by some bureaucrat, picked up by the party's big media friends and thrown out there for the electorate to chew on. When asked what's the proof, the advocates simply hide behind the cover of 'can't tell you, it's classified information'.

In the week(s) ahead, a flood of further fear-mongering 'Sanders slanders' are certainly to appear from the party's Clinton-Obama hacks and their 'in-house' media sources like MSNBC. We'll hear ad nauseam themes like "Sanders can't defeat Trump". "Sanders will result in losses 'down ballot'" (i.e. Congress Reps & Senators). "Sanders has always been a

friend of Russia and Putin”. “Sanders is not really a Democrat”. “Sanders can’t attract the needed moderate Republicans and Independents in swing states”. And let’s not forget the even more direct charge, voiced by Bloomberg in the last debate, that “He’s a Commie”. Fox News will no doubt stretch that one to the limit and beyond.

The Pre-Nevada TV Debate

Last week’s TV debates showed clearly the limits of Bloomberg as candidate. Warren and Biden know well that Bloomberg is there to steal their support. Warren’s scathing critique of Bloomberg in the pre-Nevada caucus TV debate, exposed him as a Trump retread. Like Trump, Bloomberg carries similar baggage of non-disclosure agreements involving abused women, refusal to release his tax returns, his stop & frisk unconstitutional policing in New York while mayor, and Bloomberg’s public statement and belief that the end of ‘red-lining’ in housing was the cause of the 2008-09 housing crash (yes, he said that!).

Bloomberg’s only message in the debate was only he could defeat Trump. Really? Polls show he performs worst against Trump than almost all the other candidates. Meanwhile, as Warren went after Bloomberg in the debate, Buttigieg and Klobuchar engaged in an on-stage ‘food fight’ over who failed more to deliver results for their constituents. Not to be outdone, Biden on occasion awoke briefly from his deep political sleep, only to fall into a political coma onstage again.

The Meaning of the Nevada Caucus Results

According to the latest count, Sanders won 47% or more of the popular vote. Biden only 21%. Thus sleepy Joe’s much heralded ‘wall’ of union and Latino support in Nevada was breached and shattered by Sanders. Despite Sanders’ overwhelming win, however, it is reported that he will receive only 9 of the potential 36 Nevada caucus delegates—i.e. another indicator how the caucus and primary rules have been rigged against him. While winning the popular vote in all three of the contests thus far in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada—a feat never before accomplished by any candidate in a Democratic party primary season—Sanders still has accumulated only 30 votes (+ the 9?), while Buttigieg reportedly has been awarded 27.

The Nevada caucus shows the under 35 youth vote—both union and minority—are moving to Sanders. Biden’s campaign is now on life support. If he doesn’t win big by a wide margin in the next primary in South Carolina next weekend, he is campaign toast. If the same dynamic occurs as did in Nevada, with the youth minority vote going to Sanders, then Biden’s ‘wall of black support’ will crash just as his union-Latino wall did in Nevada.

The South Carolina Primary

The Democrat voter base is 60% black in South Carolina. Polls show Biden with only 27% black support to Sanders’ 23%. Biden can’t afford to win that narrowly. If he does, his money support—already dwindling—will collapse just as the Super Tuesday primaries begin. He must win big over Sanders in South Carolina or else his days in the primaries are numbered. But if Bernie has 23% support now and momentum, it’s clear he’s going to peel off much of the under-35 black vote in the South Carolina primary next weekend.

A second place by Sanders in North Carolina will be viewed as another big victory for him; a weak first place by Biden will be viewed as the last nail in his primary campaign coffin.

What the Democrat party leadership and their candidates don't understand is the dynamics of movement politics. Sanders has a movement behind him, focused around the youth, and increasingly minority, voter surge toward Sanders. Sanders' support remains solid in the 35% or more range, steadily growing. Bloomberg is siphoning off the support of the other candidates, not Sanders'. Warren and others know this. Thus her, and their, targeting Bloomberg in the last debate. What irks Elizabeth and the other candidates most, however, is that Bloomberg is buying his way into their base.

In some ways, the Sanders movement is beginning to show signs not unlike the Obama surge in 2008. There are also elements of similarity to Trump's 2016 movement and campaign. But Democrat Party leaders don't understand the movement dynamic going on today in their own party—any more than they understood the movement dynamic that brought Trump to the top of the Republican ticket in 2016. They failed to predict Trump's win; they're failing to predict Sanders'.

The Super Tuesday (March 3) Primaries

The 15 state primaries to be held next week will reveal the fundamental contest behind the cacophony of the multiple candidates' campaigns. That contest is between the money interests and leadership of the Democrat Party vs. the bottom-up surge demanding change and the re-direction of the party away from the neoliberal policies and those money interests dominating the party that has been the case at least since the early 1990s.

No less than 37% of all the party's Milwaukee convention's 1,991 delegates will be determined by Super Tuesday, a week from now. By the end of March, it will be 60%. That's not counting, of course, the more than 500 Special Delegates the party leadership is holding in its back pocket. They will be released on the second ballot at the convention by the party leadership, in order to ensure their choice nominee gets the party's presidential nod at the convention. And their choice is Bloomberg, not Sanders.

The party leadership's prime strategic goal now is to stop Sanders. Their boy Biden can't do it. So they've brought Bloomberg in from the wings (after reportedly taking a \$50 million contribution from him to their general campaign fund). The other candidates are being kept in the race in order to split the votes in the primaries, to prevent Sanders from getting a clear majority on the first ballot at the convention. After that, the leadership will release the 'kraken' of the 500 Special Delegates to vote for their own billionaire in the presidential race, Bloomberg.

The Consequences of the Democrat Leadership's Current Strategy

The leadership-corporate wing clearly believes they can win the November election even if they scuttle Sanders once again and prevent him from getting the nomination. One can almost hear them talking in the backrooms and cloakrooms at the primary city hotels: "We only lost in 2016 by 70 electoral votes in 3 swing states. We can take those states (Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin) in 2020 even without Bernie. The minorities have nowhere else to go. The Union top leaders are with us. Middle class white women hate Trump, especially in the swing state suburbs and exurbs. We'll put a woman or a minority on the ticket as VP. That'll keep the youth and progressives in tow. We'll adopt Sanders' programs in our campaign speeches, then drop them after the election. We can win without Sanders on the ticket!".

But they are wrong. Sanders' voters will largely abstain. Being prevented from the nomination twice, in 2016 and now 2020, they will mostly not vote. Trump will eat Bloomberg alive in the presidential debates. And the Democrats will lose in November with Bloomberg...once again. They will prove they are strategically inept and tactically incapable once again.

What the party's leadership will accomplish should they scuttle Sanders in 2020, however, is to set in motion a process leading to the creation of a bona-fide third party. This time rising from a real grass roots movement base, not via some top-down declaration by left intellectuals or some ambitious politician. This time the real thing.

Should it lose in November, the Democrat Party leadership will be painted as having re-elected Trump by having maneuvered in Bloomberg and pushed out Sanders. Even if they win with Bloomberg in November, given the deep economic crisis that will erupt immediately after the election (if not sooner), they will once again propose Obama-like neoliberal policies that won't resolve that crisis any better for Main St. in 2021 than had Obama in 2009. And unlike Obama in 2012, they won't be given a second chance.

Should that joint political-economic crisis scenario emerge post-November 2020, what remains of the Democrat party will implode. US politics in 2024 will thereafter be on a totally new plane.

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