

DOGFIGHT POLITICS

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Patriotism always exists in the greatest degree in rude nations, and in an early period of society. Like all other affections and passions, it operates with the greatest force where it meets with the greatest difficulties ... but in a state of ease and safety, as if wanting its appropriate nourishment, it languishes and decays.

Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee

*It was long ago observed that the plain people, under democracy, never vote for anything, but always **against** something.*

H.R. Mencken

The first American election I witnessed was in 1976. I was a fresh arrival in New York and the Watergate scandal had already claimed Richard Nixon.¹ The first energy crisis had blindsided American consumers enjoying 25-cents-per-gallon gasoline at the pump. Inflation had taken hold and spread fear and loathing among economists, politicians, and the common folk. The Vietnam War had come to a disastrous climax. And Gerald Ford, a Republican who succeeded Richard Nixon after his resignation, pardoned the disgraced ex-president leading “progressives” to howl in protest. I was fascinated by the unfolding campaign brought to us live on (black-and-white) television. I devoured newspaper stories. Those were the days of [Walter Cronkite](#) and [Harry Reasoner](#); of delightfully crafted spoken English; and of unwritten codes of journalistic ethics that strike today’s “journalists” as jokes from deep antiquity.

It was a different world.

2016. Now situated in Seattle, I am watching a presidential election campaign that has been described as “a low point in American history,” “an unmitigated disaster,” and “ugliness

¹The Watergate hearings, chaired by the late Senator Sam Ervin, served as an early platform of [accusations](#) against Hillary Clinton. Democrats have vehemently rejected this “zombie” story and [continue](#) to do so.

defined.” In a recent discussion I witnessed, an exasperated middle-aged town hall meeting attendee described the campaign as “dogfight politics.” I found this description the near perfect definition of what is going on today as we approach the November 8 election (although many, I am sure, feel that *all politics* is a dogfight anyway).

Toward the end of the primaries 2016 both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump [were disliked more strongly](#) than any nominee at that point in the past ten presidential cycles. Cheap barroom language has a field day. From the beginning, both candidates tried to cast themselves as the Deliverers of all that is good and decent -- while all the while plowing into the opponent in ways even hardened pundits find distasteful. Mrs. Clinton has declared Trump potential voters as belonging to “a basket of deplorables”-- an expression that would have spelt the end of *any* American politician who would dare use it in the recent past. Mrs. Clinton made a brief apology and breezed ahead with nary a murmur of complaint from her camp that *applauded and cheered* at the “accurate description” of tens of millions of Americans she offered.²

Mr. Trump, labeled a “lunatic,” a “misogynist,” a “rampant xenophobe,” a “clown,” a “racist,” a “serial liar,” and a “Third World autocrat,” is best compared by left liberal commentators to Vladimir Putin and he is not holding back either.

Mr. Trump “joked” that if he were president Mrs. Clinton would be in prison. His supporters stage noisy demonstrations in favor of “Hillary in jail.” Mr. Trump demanded that his opponent takes a drug test before a debate in view of her poor health (a claim her camp rejects despite visible and undeniable signs³ to the contrary). By now, Mr. Trump’s locker room profanity has carved a new frontier in public political “discourse.” Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), a current darling of the left liberal establishment, who has endorsed Mrs. Clinton, [has called](#) Mr. Trump a “selfish little sleaze ball.”⁴ Supporters on both sides express [violent dislike of the opposite camp](#) with expressions that often border on pure hatred.

My own correspondences with American friends and chats with neighbors and during encounters in public events confirm this putrefied surly voter mood. Animosity and disgust, but also widespread doubts about *both candidates*, dominate the attitude toward the upcoming election. Committed Democrats say they vote for Mrs. Clinton because “we need to choose the lesser of two evils” despite accepting that Mrs. Clinton is not to be trusted because of [a litany of reasons](#).⁵ Republicans, who find Mr. Trump not to their taste, suggest that “the evil of the other

²Pro-Clinton editorial opinion writers went immediately into [elaborate spin mode](#) to justify the remark.

³See visuals [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Also, during the final presidential debate, [Hillary’s Strange Head Movements Were The Talk Of The Debate](#).

⁴The use of such expressions should hopefully make those remembering the good senator as the sterling Leo Gottlieb Professor of Law at Harvard Law School wonder, to say the least.

⁵The *Atlantic Monthly*, no friend to Mr. Trump, [reported](#): *Hillary Clinton can’t be trusted because she’ll do anything to win. That’s what several participants in a focus group of thirty undecided voters moderated by Republican strategist Frank Luntz on Friday in Alexandria, Virginia, seemed to believe. At least some of the group of Democratic, Republican and Independent-leaning voters felt the first woman to win the presidential nomination of a major U.S. political party was too ambitious.*

“She’s lied again and again and again in the pursuit of power,” one man warned. “This has been her entire life’s work, it seems like, has been building up to this moment, so she doesn’t have any shots left.”

side” must be opposed “at all costs,” which includes going to the voting booth holding their noses. Both Democrats and Republicans speak of “dashed hopes” in an economy that refuses to bounce back, despite official optimist pronouncements, and complain about their individual immediate future.

Younger voters, who fervently supported the Bernie Sanders failed presidential bid, are fuming at what they perceive as a “disgusting flip flop” by the Vermont senator, a self-described Democratic Socialist. They see their past favorite standard bearer subsumed by the Clinton campaign under circumstances that are suspect, double-faced, and illegal. In the wake of the Sanders cave-in⁶ a stream of accounts such as [this](#) accused the Democratic Party organization (and, unavoidably, Mrs. Clinton herself) of running a corrupt, rigged scheme against Sanders-sourced “progressivism” and the “only” program encompassing true socialist ideals.

The apparent disdain toward Sanders supporters, expressed by Mrs. Clinton in conversation and [caught](#) on audio, has not helped in healing the wounds either. Now, polls say, “millenials,” i.e. people who reached young adulthood around 2000, are [flocking](#) to third-party candidates by the hundreds of thousands or state they won’t vote at all because they [“don’t like this election.”](#) This is the worst possible news for [both candidates](#).

Another bitter point of contention, especially for Republicans, is *an unprecedented mobilization of the so-called “mainstream media” on the side of the Clinton campaign*. Recent polling suggests that traditional sources of news -- networks, ‘establishment’ newspapers, etc. -- are discredited in the eyes of the public way [beyond redemption](#), with Democrats though more prone to believe what this media dishes out as “unbiased” news stories.

I must admit that the media circus reawakens my old feelings about Greek media corruption, misrepresentation, malfeasance, and crookedness as I read meltdown reports about Mrs. Clinton. Such news stories, one Sanders irate 30-something supporter told me, comprise “pathetic pre-fabricated drivel written by people on the payroll [of the Clinton campaign].”

Another point of contention feeding distrust towards established media is the takeover of many famous American press marques by “globalist” businessmen with an agenda. The *Washington Post* (est. 1877), for example, a former beacon of investigative journalism ([Watergate](#)), has been bought by Jeff Bezos, owner of Amazon.com, at present the biggest retail company in the world. Mr. Bezos [took issue](#) with the Trump candidacy using the *WP*, unsurprisingly, as his preferred platform.

“She wants it so much she’ll say anything, she’ll do anything,” a woman chimed in, adding: “the people behind her will say anything or do anything. Do I want those kind of people in power? Oh, please no.”

⁶In a matter of weeks, Sanders shattered the confidence of millions of supporters who rushed to his side from Day One of the campaign, which based its funding on [“passionate small donors”](#) only. He won 43.1 percent of the delegates of the Democratic convention; many of his supporters demonstrated during the convention against Mrs. Clinton making their animosity strong and loud. Their descriptions of her in one word never seemed [to go well](#). Bernie’s *volte-face* is a candidate case study of how to build success in order *to lose*. Today, and as Sanders acts as a busy prop for the Clinton campaign, he attracts audiences in the hundreds, at best. Gone are the *thousands* of fervent “Berners” who mobbed his speaking venues before the convention. Berner reaction to his unequivocal endorsement of Mrs. Clinton was [predictable](#). The bitter Berner fight against Mrs. Clinton has now moved to social media ([example](#) and [example](#)).

Another former beacon of journalistic ethos and newspaper of record, *The New York Times* (est. 1851) of [Pentagon Papers](#) fame, has been “rescued” (read: bought) by Carlos Slim Helú, a Mexican multi-billionaire [“who is sometimes ranked as the richest man in the world.”](#)

Even the most well-intentioned observer of such acquisitions would be hard pressed to accept that these papers will continue to enjoy “editorial liberty and preeminence” in defending “free speech” to the death and ignore “friendly reminders” from the boss holding the purse strings.⁷

The strident tenor of the campaign has brought into sharp relief divisions and conflicts inside both parties. In the Democratic camp, the Berners made clear that closing ranks behind Mrs. Clinton is a sign of undue conservatism, not to say kowtowing to the “establishment.”⁸ Elected Democrats remained hostile to the senator from Vermont who, in his past pronouncements, did not hesitate to criticize them, often in no uncertain terms. Mrs. Clinton, after Sanders initial victories in the primaries, [questioned](#) the Vermonter’s “fidelity” to the party. Reports claiming Sanders was trying to “highjack” the Democratic platform proliferated.

On the Republican side, the party establishment watched in painful disbelief as Mr. Trump made mincemeat out of a bevy of potential party nominees beginning with Jeb Bush (the man who was born ‘with the golden spoon in his mouth’)⁹. Mr. Trump’s bulldozer style shook established Republican attitudes and exposed a deep rift between the “glass tower” party seniors and the average Republican voter feeling abandoned and [betrayed](#). The rift thus created will outlast this campaign and, by all estimates, [“Trumpism”](#) stands to reshape Republican Party politics in fundamental and lasting ways well into the future.

Irrespective of the outcome of the November 8 vote, this “dogfight” presidential campaign marks a crucial turning point in American politics. Voters on all sides are now outspoken about what they believe the Obama administration has done to the American system -- and the views are sharply divided in ways that are unprecedented.¹⁰

Democrats fear and loath the prospect of a possible conservative administration putting the brakes on “runaway liberalism,” stopping their efforts to create an “Obamist” Supreme Court, checking the onslaught of self-appointed minority “justice warriors,” and the legitimizing illegal immigrants via “fast track” procedures.

⁷Emily Bell from the Tow Center for Digital Journalism, Columbia Journalism School has [suggested](#) the obvious regarding Bezos acquiring the newspaper: *What we cannot know about Bezos, because he has never been tested, is how he will like the irrational world of newspaper ownership, where the media gaze is more intense per dollar invested than in any other domain. How will he react – especially after Amazon's recent clinching of a \$600m contract to provide cloud services to the CIA – to the flow of stories from his own publication on the NSA and its covert pact with the tech industry to trace our every move? How will he like his Amazon workplace practices scrutinised by his own paper? How will he like being in a world where they greatest measure of success is to irritate, damage or, at best, remove a president and other public officials?*

⁸Note this [trouble](#) with Berners, for example.

⁹News [marveled](#) at “How Jeb Bush Spent \$130 Million Running for President With Nothing to Show for It.”

¹⁰The question “What has Barack Obama done that gets so many people angry?” elicits an avalanche of [detailed negative answers](#).

Republicans frown at the *Clintonista* unconditional support for “gender equality,” approval of abortion, and attack on Second Amendment rights.¹¹ Those on the religious Right decry the “atheist” approach of the liberal left and the “progressive” ditching of the Christian foundations of the Republic. Republicans demand tight border security and a hard strategy against Islamic terrorism -- both of them issues the Democrats prefer to sidestep.

That Mrs. Clinton, if elected, will continue on the Obama hard left liberal course *energizes opposition to a potential Clinton presidency which promises severe testing of her presumed policies and political turbulence that could equal, and most likely surpass, the upheavals of the 1960s.* Conservative commentators describe President Obama as [The Great Divider](#) and miss no opportunity to assign him culpability for a litany of reasons -- from refusing to use the term “Islamic terrorism” to [defending](#) the Black Lives Matter movement, which many outside the liberal left consider inimical to domestic security, and to [cultivating](#) illegal immigration to pushing for “diversity” and “gender equality” in ways that offend and divide. The list can on and on.¹²

America today faces crises which, to use a meteorological metaphor, resemble converging severe weather fronts. The 2008 economic collapse merged with a host of intractable problems -- declining social “harmony,” debilitating “activism,” racial tensions (now termed ‘anxieties’), the destruction of the middle class, dead-end economics, illegal immigration, the Islamic threat, [bleak prospects](#) for the younger generation, and so much else.

America’s difficult predicament, however, is not unique; Europe is in far worse position as it faces the irrepressible resurgence of a Germany which reminds us of days past we would rather forget, an unstoppable [illegal Moslem immigration invasion](#), a Russia with “tsarist” ambitions, and the slow disintegration of a European “dis-Union,” which many profess to love but millions hate.

In her current predicament, America, irrespective of who will take the presidential oath of office in January 2017, will continue to struggle with willful ignorance lest “social equality activism” is harnessed, the fear of calling a spade a spade lest selected groups of people become “threatened,” the muffled neglect of principles that helped this Republic become the most powerful country on earth, and governance that the great “silent majority” sees as dominated by the interests of a narrow minority intent on social engineering and power grabbing.

The real battle thus begins on Day One of the next administration and it will be a battle between excess and deficiency¹³ that will define the rest of the American 21st century.

¹¹Mrs. Clinton is a [fervent promoter](#) of a 25 percent tax on firearms and a raise of dealer’s fees from under \$100 to \$2,500. Her position is cause for war for organized pro-gun organizations and gun owners.

¹²For a comprehensive account of conservative views on the Obama era see *The Worst President in History: The Legacy of Barack Obama* [here](#).

¹³In center stage of this battle [“diversity”](#) will continue to play a keen and divisive role, with its social and political impact a vehemently contested subject. One way or another, we are [witnessing](#) “... a 21st Century American revolution and the latest stage of political party evolution played out for all to see on television.”