

A Reckoning Is in Store for Democrats

The collusion smear lies in ruins amid a throng of lackluster candidates

by Conrad Black



The crisis of the Democrats is becoming more evident each week. Those of us who have been loudly predicting for years that the Russian-collusion argument would be exposed as a defamatory farce, and that the authors of it would eventually pay for it, are bemused at the fallback position of the Trump-haters: that the distinguished attorney general has whitewashed the president in his summary and his decision that there was no obstruction of justice. One of the most entertaining moments of news-watching in many years came last

week, when former national intelligence director James Clapper said it was “scary” and former FBI director Comey said it was “bizarre” to hear Attorney General William Barr say that the Trump campaign had been spied on. It has been obvious for a long time that both these men and former CIA director John Brennan lied under oath on a number of occasions, and Comey’s complaint last week that “court-ordered surveillance” wasn’t spying is going to get a full assessment when the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance (FISA) warrants that were the court authorization in this case, and were obtained on the basis of false campaign smears assembled and paid for by the Clinton campaign, are judicially considered.

Given the proportions of the scam that has been perpetrated, the principal actors, including those just named, deserve commendation for the imperishability of their unctuousness. These people seem still to be oblivious to the fact that lying under oath and producing false FISA applications are serious offenses. And some of the congressional Democrats, such as Congressmen Nadler, Swalwell, and Schiff (the new-millennium version of “Martin, Barton, and Fish,” made infamous by FDR in 1940), seem to think they have a perfect constitutional right to keep the president in the pillory of their spurious investigations indefinitely. The whole edifice of the Trump moral crisis is coming down in shards around the ears of the Clinton and Obama Democrats.

The numberless candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination will presumably go to hilarious extremes to sidestep the whole Trump-impeachment debacle, but the credibility of the Democratic party, given the total immersion the Clinton-Obama era is about to receive in the Trump-collusion perfidy, will not be unscathed. After the brave launches of the candidacies, almost all of them have floundered. Kirsten Gillibrand, who has done and said absolutely nothing to merit consideration as president, has launched and sunk down the slipways and beneath the waves –

her candidacy has attracted zero support. Most of the other candidates are equally unprepossessing. Cory Booker, perhaps the most compulsively verbose candidate since Hubert Humphrey (who was a good deal more thoughtful and entertaining), is apparently full of goodwill, but very inadequate. Kamala Harris seems to have the makings of a good candidate, but she is already tangled up in the runaway leftward nonsense of open borders, socialized medicine, high taxes, and the Green terror. Beto O'Rourke, as foreseen, after a brief flurry, has skateboarded off the dock and been abandoned by the media as an arm-flapping airhead. Elizabeth Warren is everyone's nightmare of a severe, humorless kindergarten teacher, and she will not recover from her masquerade as a native Indian. Amy Klobuchar is sensible and seems likeable but has no pizzazz and hasn't made inroads so far with radical normalcy, though its time could come.

The sensible majority of Democrats note that their party, on the heels of the Russian-collusion disaster, has completely bungled the border-and-migration issue and has gone down in flames with the claim that it is a crisis manufactured by the president. They have watched in silent horror as their party has been stampeded to the left, and the search is already under way for a moderate candidate. This will require breaking the bipartisan tradition of elevating the runner-up from the previous campaign. Bernie Sanders would expect to follow Hillary Clinton, as Mrs. Clinton lost to and succeeded Barack Obama, and Bob Dole did the same with George H. W. Bush, and John McCain with George W. Bush. But Bernie Sanders will be 79 on the next Inauguration Day, and he was too far left for the Democrats four years ago, when they lost to Trump, and he is still moving left. They are starting to put up a Sanders alternative every two weeks, as the Republicans did against Mitt Romney in 2012 – Michelle Bachmann, Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum – and Romney was a centrist. Each rival arose, mounted a serious challenge, and then imploded for different reasons.

The Democrats' main Stop Sanders candidate has been Joe Biden, but he has been sandbagged by the now customary, if not obligatory, flood of disrespected women from previous years and decades. That seems to be surmountable, as Biden was only tactile, not intrusive, but the simmering concerns about his financial relations with Ukraine and controversies in his family seem to be delaying his decision. He is not, at the best of times, an exciting candidate, but he might at least prevent a McGovern-level seismic electoral landslide, which is what awaits any Democratic candidate festooned with the cornucopia of this campaign's far-left nostrums.

Beto was the first try at a new face, and he bombed. Mayor Pete Buttigieg seems to be the next. He is an interesting candidate and had a good launch. The fact that he is only 37, gay, and the mayor of a rather small city gives him plenty of novelty, and he is the most articulate of the candidates. His approach to the gay issue is also imaginative. He is unapologetic about being gay and asserts that he would much rather be straight, but that God made him as he is, and therefore this should not be held against him: "Your complaint is with my creator." It is not belligerent gay-pride-in-your-face self-defense. There are presumably an appreciable number of people, most of them quite tolerant, who would rather not have a gay president, and their problem, in that regard, is with the candidate, not with God, who created tens of millions of people they would not, for many other reasons, wish to be president. Good try, but no sale. Mayor Pete deserves to hang in for a while, but he is a bit of a wolf in sheep's clothing ideologically, and being mayor of South Bend is a training school for Congress or being governor, but not president in one leap.

My guess is that Biden can still win the nomination, but it will be a pretty unenthusiastic campaign. If he doesn't make his move fairly soon, Klobuchar may gradually rise as the presentable alternative to sirens of the left. Trump will get

an improved trade arrangement with China, the North Korean discussions will at least not have descended back to nuclear saber-rattling, and there may be progress in the Middle East, as the Arabs don't want the Palestinians muddying the waters while the Turks and Iranians are crowding the Arab powers. Trump will have got enough done with the southern border to satisfy the national concern on that subject, will have a full-employment economy, and will conduct an extremely flamboyant campaign flailing the Democrats with all the Trump-collusion nonsense. Incumbent presidents have been defeated only twice since the Great Depression – Jimmy Carter was not a very effective president, and George H. W. Bush allowed the political charlatan Ross Perot to split his party and take 20 million votes. Trump will have the strongest first term to run on since Reagan, or even Nixon, and they both carried 49 states. Trump won't do that, but he hasn't made a seriously unfortunate public utterance for months and looks stronger each week.

First published in [National Review Online](#).