

Is Vivek Ramaswamy Trump 2.0?



by Roger L. Simon

NORTH CONWAY. N.H.—Vivek Ramaswamy isn't making much of a dent in the polls yet, but judging from the audience reaction at a packed Masonic lodge in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, it won't be long.

Everyone was paying close attention. There was no sense in the room of skepticism over why this 37-year-old guy—out of nowhere and standing there with his doctor wife—had the temerity to run for president. They got it. He had done his homework and then some.

Several people during the lengthy question session prefaced theirs with “I voted for Trump but I’m going to vote for you.” Others nodded in agreement.

This was an audience of what might be called the political version of tech's "early adopters," the kind of folks that turn out for candidates 18 months before an election when others are watching sports or the latest reality show. They tend to be well-informed and are the ones who tell their friends what to think when the time comes.

A number of such people live in the early caucus and primary states—Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina—where they have seen this before and often have a "show me" attitude. Of these, the New Hampshirites seem to have the strongest libertarian streak endemic to Northern New England.

Some demonstrated this on that Friday night, including a woman who queried the candidate about why we shouldn't, after all, just get things over with and finally have a national divorce from the liberals and progressives with their stultified views and go our own way, à la John Galt?

This drew an impassioned response from Ramaswamy who, although he understood the woman's frustration, sees the basis of his candidacy as the opposite of that, kind of a moral crusade for the preservation of our embattled republic and its constitution, something beyond political party. He also sees us as a necessary example of democracy in a world increasingly led by totalitarian China and its allies. The answer could have been mawkish but it was heartfelt and impressive.

After having been with his campaign only a few weeks ago in South Carolina, it was interesting to see Ramaswamy in action. He has already upped his game, speaking with a more polished cadence, less staccato.

As a spontaneous, notes-free speaker about politics, I have rarely seen anyone as fluent (perhaps Bill Clinton, but with less actual content). While some are as, if not more, charismatic, his grasp of the issues and his ability to articulate them fully, which he often does in novel ways, is

rather extraordinary.

He doesn't insult our intelligence, nor engage very heavily in partisan politics, which he almost disdains. As he put it on Twitter: "It's not R vs. D. It's not black vs. white. It's the Great Reset vs. the Great Uprising."

Whether he or anybody else can defeat this "Reset" that is already all around us and growing every day remains to be seen. Ramaswamy makes no claim he can do it alone. In fact, he said repeatedly at the gathering this could only succeed as a group project for the return to the American values of our Founders. We were all involved in this battle against "woke" corporations who, in collusion with our government, are leading us inevitably to globalist socialism/communism.

That night, he had just returned from delivering an apparently well-received speech in defense of the Second Amendment at an NRA meeting in Indiana, and spoke of it in New Hampshire as well.

An avid tennis player—he was once No. 1 junior in Ohio—who infrequently goes to firing ranges, he doesn't use sports or hunting as his primary reasons for his staunch support of the amendment. He insists the Second Amendment is the absolutely necessary component to defend the First Amendment, freedom of speech, without which America wouldn't be America.

He also made a Second Amendment recommendation regarding Taiwan that might at first seem rash, but even on short reflection makes considerable sense. Ramaswamy thinks we should give AR-15s to every citizen of that island nation and teach them how to use them to deter the aggression of the communist Chinese.

Vivek thinks that America is in the midst of an identity crisis, but, as a young civilization in historical terms, has the resilience of a teenager who can work through it. In that sense, his message is optimistic.

The main theme of his campaign has been since its inception the overall necessity of defining America for and to ourselves—who we are and what we want to be—that he feels has been lost in our “woke” culture with its faux religions of climate and transgenderism.

He believes if we solve this basic problem, if we find ourselves again in the tradition of the Founders, the solution to others—the economy, our place in the world, and so forth—will suddenly be a lot simpler and gain a national consensus.

He articulates this in a manner that is similar to Donald Trump’s, but is more precise and detailed, one might even say writerly.

The elephant in the room that night was, of course, Trump, currently battling legal accusations, dubious though they may be, on several fronts. The 45th president tends to take oxygen from rooms even when he is not there.

The question naturally arises where does Ramaswamy fit in this equation? Is he more Trump than Trump? Is he then Trump 2.0, willing, as he says, to take things further and actually emptying the Deep State? He advocates term limits for virtually everyone in Washington.

Or could he end up running with Trump? Anything’s possible.

It’s unlikely that Gov. Ron DeSantis will—there’s already so much bad blood between the two poll leaders.

As for the Republican field in general, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, despite extensive early soundings, has declined to run. Former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley isn’t generating much interest. Sen. Tim Scott doesn’t appear to have much of a chance, even in his native South Carolina, according to polls. Former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson says he’s running, but no one can explain why. And former Vice

President Mike Pence still hasn't jumped in, with a fair number of people urging him not to for his own sake.

As of this writing, I would have to say it's between Trump (the heavy favorite), DeSantis, and now, coming up on the outside but still with a long way to go, Ramaswamy.

This could make for an interesting discussion on the Republican side as could, all of a sudden and shockingly, the Democratic side with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. throwing his hat in the ring with a formal announcement next week.

I'll be along for the ride. Next stop with Vivek: Berlin, New Hampshire. More to come.

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