

The Antisemitic Cloud over Biden's Kingmaker

by E. B Samuel



U.S. Rep. James Clyburn (D-S.C.) has been credited with salvaging former Vice President Joe Biden's Democratic presidential primary campaign, rallying his state's critical African American voting bloc behind Biden last month.

With Biden now the presumptive Democratic nominee American Jews—who split 70 percent for Democrat Hillary Clinton, 25 percent for Republican Donald Trump in 2016—would do well to look behind the instant imagery. Ruth R. Wisse's essential *Jews and Power*, newly released in a second edition, suggests why.

Wisse, Harvard University professor emerita, says Western Europe's emancipated Jews of the 19th century were “blindsided

by their apparent political progress and thrilled by the real augmentation of their civil liberties.” As a result, they “failed to appreciate that the replacement of a single autocratic ruler by an elected assembly had potentially reduced rather than increased their political influence. The same politicians they tried to enlist in their defense could also sacrifice their interests to far larger competing constituencies.”

In 2011, Rep. Clyburn—now the third-ranked Democrat in the House—shared the stage with perhaps America’s highest profile antisemite, Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. He did so, *The Daily Caller*, a conservative news site, recalled in 2018, “even after Jewish groups voiced their opposition to Clyburn attending the event. Clyburn told *The Final Call*, a Nation of Islam publication, that he was ‘not bothered in the least bit’ by criticisms of his attendance at the event.”

Afterward, Rep. Clyburn asserted “I have fought all my life to advance the cause of social justice and equality, and I have always opposed bigotry in all its forms.” Nevertheless, his office “declined repeated inquiries regarding whether the congressman is willing to condemn Farrakhan, and whether he stood by his decision in 2011 to shrug off criticisms of Farrakhan.”

When the bigotry of a Farrakhan is “privileged” over calls by Jews to reject such hatred, invocations of “social justice” and “equality” become Orwellian bromides. They advance their opposites.

News media coverage of Clyburn’s political rescue by Biden almost always omitted the latter’s Farrakhan episode. Unfortunately, journalistic cover-ups of antisemitism are common.

Repeated examples occur in reporting about Reps. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) and Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.). The pair often are

described as harsh critics of Israeli treatment of Palestinian Arabs and challengers of pro-Israel lobbyists instead of as what they chronically provide evidence of being—knee-jerk enemies of the Jewish state and anti-Jewish demagogues.

The majority of American Jews, “blindsided” by generations of loyalty to and activism within the Democratic Party, repeatedly fail to apprehend their declining political influence. Shrinking demographically, Jews find ’60s liberalism wilts ideologically before “woke” leftist hostility to their alleged white privilege and purported racism.

They fail to grasp their intra-party sacrifice to larger competing constituencies. Yet this was on painful display in last year’s House Democratic leadership refusal to condemn directly Omar’s antisemitism.

Which returns us to Biden. Once a moderate liberal, he is pulled ever leftward by the man Rep. Clyburn helped him overcome in South Carolina.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) has perhaps the worst record on U.S.-Israel relations of anyone in the Senate. Unlike then-Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.), the party’s pro-Israel vice presidential candidate in 2000, Sanders rarely mentioned his own Judaism publicly before his 2016 and 2020 presidential primary campaigns. In contrast to Lieberman’s affirmations, Sanders did so largely in the negative, in terms of his family’s Holocaust losses.

In 2017, Sanders campaigned in Great Britain for fellow socialist Jeremy Corbin. Corbin, a friend of the terrorist Palestinian Hamas movement, was then leader of an increasingly anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish Labor Party. Official Sanders’ campaign surrogates this year included Rep. Omar and Linda Sarsour, another Farrakhan enabler and Israel-hater (“nothing is creepier than Zionism”).

Biden hopes to enlist Sanders’ illiberal progressives,

energizers of the Democratic base. As vice president, Biden, like his boss President Barack Obama, imagined that what prevented Arab-Israeli peace was Israel's reluctance to repeat the deadly fiasco of its 2005 withdrawal from the Gaza Strip by also evacuating the West Bank. Palestinian rejectionism, incitement and terrorism somehow were not the 800-pound gorillas trashing diplomacy.

Wisse observes that European Jews were "unable to see themselves through the eyes of their enemies." So, "they could not fathom that their utility as a political target rather than their actions defined their role in the politics of their opponents."

This was true for Nazis, the Soviets, pan-Arabists and pan-Islamists. It's true again for the post-liberal progressives sparked by Sanders that Biden, saved by Clyburn, hopes to co-opt.

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