

What Bloomberg Wants

He isn't really running for president; he's running for secretary of state.

by Conrad Black



The entry of Michael Bloomberg into the race for the Democratic presidential nomination is not, I think, exactly what it seems. The claim and assumption is that Bloomberg became alarmed at the stumbling candidacy of Joe Biden and has charged to the rescue of the sensible Democrats. In this reasoning, Biden no longer afforded reasonable confidence that the nomination would be kept out of the hands of advocates of universally socialized medicine, the Green Terror, open borders, sharp corporate and upper-income tax increases, huge "reparations" to African and native Americans, and legalized live-birth abortions (i.e. infanticide). Biden seemed to be faltering, goes the reasoning; Mayor Buttigieg of South Bend, Ind., lacks the necessary stature and carries a lot of leftist baggage as he tries to change lanes to the center, and Senator Klobuchar of Minnesota is presentable but humdrum, Walter Mondale in drag. What is needed is the three-term mayor of the Big Apple, builder of a mighty business, formidable

philanthropist, and, though she does not become too involved politically, longtime escort of a very accomplished and in all respects impressive woman (Diana Taylor).

This is a dream come true for the Democrats plodding along with myriad forgettable candidates, right? Not so fast. The existing field of candidates is not very prepossessing, and they don't agree on much except their antagonism to Trump, which goes well beyond good-natured partisan posturing. JFK and Hubert Humphrey got on well personally with Richard Nixon, and the same was true of LBJ and Barry Goldwater, Bill Clinton and Bob Dole, and even Barack Obama and John McCain. But today's Democratic candidates detest and despise this president, and he cordially reciprocates their contempt. On this, Michael Bloomberg will blend right in. One might think two Manhattan billionaires would get on easily, but they don't.

From this point on, though, Bloomberg radically parts company with the tired field he is joining. Every form of envy and resentment is already surging to their tongues: Bloomberg is portrayed as a recent ex-Republican, cynically trying to buy the White House, swooping in on the pretense that he is filling a vacuum when he is really just trying to end-run the others, who have doughtily slogged through the service clubs and church basements and rural towns of Iowa and New Hampshire. Rich, smug, 77 years old (Biden and Sanders don't stress that one too much, for obvious reasons), he's a Manhattan billionaire who, they say, doesn't know the country west of the Hudson River or north of Long Island Sound, and is representing himself as the redeemer of a party he joined more recently than Donald Trump joined the Republicans (in Trump's seventh party change in 13 years). This refrain is already rising from the multi-accented chorus of the candidates who preceded him into the Democratic race.

None of the candidates is making an issue of the impeachment nonsense. The majority of Americans think that Trump should

not have raised the investigation of a political rival with a foreign leader, but that is just because the media have been allowed by the president to get away with propagating the fiction that Trump was asking Ukraine to condemn Biden. He was asking for the facts, which is completely unexceptionable. Even with this misunderstanding heavy in the air, there is not a majority for impeachment and removal, and there certainly won't be a majority for removal if this malignant farce gets to the Senate, where the president can mount a defense, which was not allowed in the House Intelligence Committee kangaroo court. If the Democrats are dumb enough to go to a Senate trial, where Schiff and this phony whistleblower will have to testify, they will be beaten to a pulp, beyond the ability of their media lackies to disguise.

Though the Democrats are not speaking of impeachment, though most of them routinely refer to Trump as the most corrupt president in history. That is unlikely, but none of the presidents has really been corrupt. Van Buren, Arthur, and LBJ may have come closer to light-fingered conduct than has Trump, a magnificent huckster, snake-oil salesman, tax avoider, and veteran of junk-bond-financed casino speculation who nonetheless has never been seriously accused of illegalities. But in the end, one of the Democrats is going to have to fight Trump's full-employment economy, his cut in the taxes of 87 percent of taxpayers, revitalization of manufacturing, reduction of poverty, elimination of oil imports and most illegal immigration, and facing up to the Chinese rivalry, the one area where he seems to have bipartisan support. Trump has 45 percent of the voters behind him no matter what the Democrats and their media puppets say, and if they take the impeachment clunker to the Senate, they will fall flat on their clueless faces. Especially after the shenanigans of Obama's intelligence agencies and Justice Department get a proper airing and impeachment fizzles, Trump will not appear to be an easy incumbent to dislodge.

It is possible that, with a still-overpopulated field, Bloomberg could get some traction as obviously the most accomplished of the Democratic contestants. However, I don't think any of it will work. His strategy – accepting no outside contributions and paying everything himself while his company news service blasts Trump without commenting on Bloomberg – will backfire. Avoiding the first four primaries will stir up great resentment; the DNC won't change its debate-eligibility yardstick to accommodate him, and I doubt if Bloomberg will get much response. He isn't an electrifying figure; he never should have recanted on stop-and-frisk (it worked); and the country doesn't like the idea of buying national office.

Trump didn't sweep the Republican primaries and win the nomination and the election because he was rich; he won *despite* his wealth, because he saw a vast unrepresented and angry section of the public, placed himself at their head, and led them to victory. He has kept faith with them and it is reciprocated. The universal Democratic view, shared by many Republicans, that Trump was a freakish and horrible fluke of the electoral system has yielded to the idea that he will be easy to defeat. In fact he will be impossible to defeat. People will tire of Trump-hating; it is a bore and doesn't get anywhere. This president wears down even his supporters, but he won't find it difficult to add some support during the election campaign to his unshakeable grip on almost half the country, since the other 55 percent are only about half Trump-haters, and the rest are slightly to largely capable of comparing him with his opponent and appreciating his policy successes as well as the policy shambles of the Democrats.

The race for the Democratic nomination is not what it seems. Michael Bloomberg is the only one in the field who would be a competent president if elected, but he isn't really running for president; he's running, one more time, for secretary of state. He did that with Jeb Bush, and then switched parties and revealed his grace of conversion with his nasty speech at

the Democratic convention, but that candidacy failed too. So here he comes again. The Democrats can't beat Trump, but they will beat Bloomberg as an advance consolation prize, and the nominee will assure him of the State Department if successful. Bloomberg would be a competent secretary of state also, but he will be to the position of secretary of state what Henry Clay and William Jennings Bryan were to the presidency: thrice-nominated unsuccessful aspirants to the office. It's a reasonable ambition and an honorable status, and a little like Nelson Rockefeller, the first of the New York billionaire politicians. If Rockefeller had run early in 1960, or earlier in 1968, he might have won, but at least he got to be vice president. Michael Bloomberg won't get that far, but he should be commended for entering public life at all, after all he has achieved in the private sector.

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