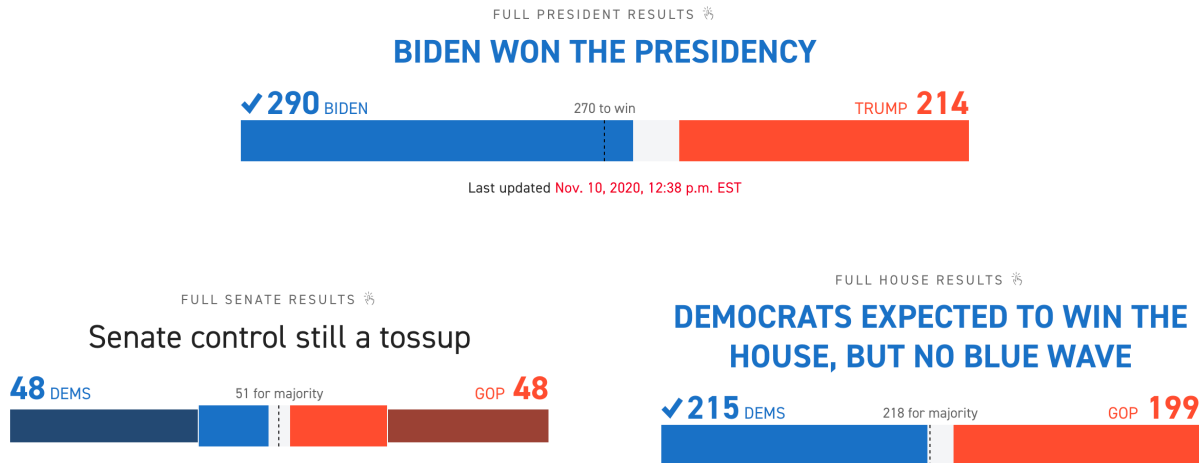


## What's it all about, Joe?

Hari Kumar, 10 November 2020



From Politico 10 November 2020, at <https://www.politico.com/2020-election/results/>

In the first part I will recap USA elections events briefly - for those whose eyes were shut for the last week. In the remaining two parts I assess likely short-term events, and the divisions within the Democratic Party in the USA.

### 1. What just happened?

Obviously the USA elections results are still being contested. However a Democratic victory for the Presidential race cannot be denied. It should be noted that still, only an estimated 60% of the electorate actually voted. For the left wing, a real concern should be the reservoir of voters who still voted for a liar - a tin-pot dictator. Why? A commentator in *The Atlantic* emphasizes the point:

"Why didn't the pandemic recession precipitate a landslide for Joe Biden? That is a central mystery stemming from a narrow, if decisive, loss for President Donald Trump. Even though the unemployment rate is more than double what it was a year ago, even though 1 million Americans a week are applying for jobless aid, even though Congress has failed for six months to pass desperately needed additional stimulus, even though Trump has the worst job-creation record of any president going back to World War II, voters gave the incumbent decent marks on the economy up to Election Day, and he expanded his 2016 vote count by at least 5.7 million."<sup>1</sup>

Well - no crushing Biden victory then. So who voted for Trump?

"Donald Trump won more than 70 million votes, the second highest total in American history. Nationally, he has more than a 47% share of his vote, and looks to have won 24

<sup>1</sup> Annie Lowrey, "Why the Election Wasn't a Biden Landslide"; Nov 6, 2020; *The Atlantic*; [https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/11/5-reasons-voters-didnt-punish-trump-for-the-economy/617010/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm\\_content=20201106&silverid-ref=Njc3MDkwMzY2NDIxSO](https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/11/5-reasons-voters-didnt-punish-trump-for-the-economy/617010/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm_content=20201106&silverid-ref=Njc3MDkwMzY2NDIxSO)

states, including his beloved Florida and Texas. He has an extraordinary hold over large swathes of this country, a visceral connection that among thousands of supporters has brought a near cult-like devotion. " <sup>2</sup>

The 'Trump-ites' include a sizeable number of those with a low income. Below are selected data points from an exit poll. While this is not the Marxist definition of a 'working class' - I think we recognize the class divide here. At the higher end the interpretation to me, is not so clear. Why so many Trump voters here? After all in modern America - many of those in the USD 100,000.00 bracket are just keeping their heads above water. Many are self-employed, or small business owners - and they may indeed be in the section of the petit bourgeois most susceptible to fascism. They may also have been bought by Trump's tax cuts. But of course what is not shown in the graphic, is the ultra-rich controllers of American society. We have previously described that ruling class as having been divided,

### What was your total family income in 2019?

Under \$30,000 15% of voters	46	54
\$30,000 - \$49,999 20%	43	56
\$50,000 - \$99,999 39%	42	57
\$100,000 - \$199,999 20%	58	41
\$200,000 or more 7%	44	44

Results from interviews with 15,590 voters are shown above. As percentage of exit poll voters. The left-hand pink column is those voting of Trump; and the blue is those voting for Biden.<sup>3</sup>

I do not propose to go down the rabbit-hole of ethnic identity - and the allegations of a major "Black shift to Trump". A large majority of African-American voters went for Biden - recognizing the racist filth that Trump spews out. Those that did not, may well be those same category of self-employed small business. The matter of the Latino vote is complex, and I park that for now. Interestingly, a left commentator, Michael Meeropol reminded me that the stimulus checks had been sent out with Trump's signature:

"The STIMULUS spending involved checks mailed directly to people with TRUMP'S SIGNATURE on it --- This made quite an impression on too many Americans --- many of

<sup>2</sup> Nick Bryant, *US election 2020: Why Donald Trump lost* <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2020-54788636>

<sup>3</sup> *National Exit Polls: How Different Groups Voted*; reported in *New York Times* on 3rd November 2020; <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/03/us/elections/exit-polls-president.html>

them really didn't see that the money being spent to help them in April, May, June and July ---- very significant of course --- was the result of a virtually unanimous decision by both Houses of Congress --- and that Trump's signature was him taking credit for something he had virtually nothing to do with --- it was all Mnuchin, Pelosi with McConnell acquiescing." <sup>4</sup>

It seems to me, that the legacy of all those years of Democratic government - without having changed fundamentally the lives of the working class - white and black - is why the predicted Democratic blue wave did not emerge. The Democratic Party façade of being the party of the working man – is irrevocably cracked.

## 2. What is likely to happen in short term?

The prospects of the new incoming Biden government face huge uncertainty. I think it will prevail despite all the noisy Trumpian rhetoric. However some hurdles remain.

Control of the Senate, a major organ of power, now depends on runoff races. Georgia 's two ardently pro-Trump Republican senators (Perdue and Loeffler) fiercely contest a rerun, but it is very likely:

"With nearly all of the ballots counted, Mr. Biden leads Mr. Trump by about 11,400 votes, and Mr. Perdue and Ms. Loeffler were forced into runoff races against Democrats — pivotal elections that could determine control of the Senate. **In the Jan. 5 runoffs**, Ms. Loeffler will face a challenge from the Rev. Dr. Raphael Warnock, the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta; Mr. Perdue is running against Jon Ossoff, the chief executive of a media production company. None of them received at least 50 percent of the vote in last week's election." <sup>5</sup>

Attempts by Trumpite officials to stall plans for transfer of powers, are at this stage - mere irritants - in my view:

"Emily W. Murphy, the administrator of the General Services Administration, refuses to issue a letter of "ascertainment," which allows Mr. Biden's transition team to begin the transfer of power." <sup>6</sup>

Despite this and the posturing of both Trump, and leading republicans such as McConnell, it is most unlikely to prevent Biden's accession. Trump has no shred of evidence to invalidate Biden's elections, as the reports of the 11th November, 2020 in the New York times make clear. Even the various court filings by Trump have not had success, right up to the indications that the Supreme Court is unlikely to rule differently if forced.

We previously showed that the ruling class was divided, and for now the majority has decided not to support Trump and the Republican Party in retaining power. <sup>7</sup> It is pretty clear that the

<sup>4</sup> Private communication. Citation: Lisa Rein, April 14, 2020, "In unprecedented move treasury orders Trump's name to be printed on stimulus checks"; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/coming-to-your-1200-relief-check-donald-j-trumps-name/2020/04/14/071016c2-7e82-11ea-8013-1b6da0e4a2b7\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/coming-to-your-1200-relief-check-donald-j-trumps-name/2020/04/14/071016c2-7e82-11ea-8013-1b6da0e4a2b7_story.html)

<sup>5</sup> Georgia Senators Ask Election Official to Resign in G.O.P. Squabble"; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/09/us/kelly-loeffler-david-perdue-raffensperger.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Nov 9, 2020; Trump Appointee Stands Between Biden's Team and a Smooth Transition'; New York Times

<sup>7</sup> <http://ml-today.com/2020/10/19/more-signs-of-establishment-moves-against-trump/>

ruling class has decided that Trump should go. After all, when *Rupert Murdoch* - the newsman of the ruling class - shows Trump the door... what more can you safely conclude?

"Multiple Rupert Murdoch-owned conservative media outlets in the United States have shifted their messaging in a seeming effort to warn readers and viewers that Donald Trump may well have lost the presidential election. The new messaging appears to be closely coordinated, and it includes an appeal to Trump to preserve his "legacy" by showing grace in defeat."<sup>8</sup>

While moving forward with a social-democratic 'labour' type set of reforms will be much easier with a Senate control, it is *not essential*, for some useful reforms. Even Trump maneuvered without Senate and Congressional approvals. For example areas *not* requiring Senate approval include: stimulus funding, tax increases on multi-national US corporations, financial regulation of the big banks, and consumer protection regulation:

"But as President Trump has demonstrated time and again, Mr. Biden has the power to pull some levers unilaterally, without congressional approval, and could influence the federal government's economic policymaking machinery through an array of executive actions, regulations and personnel changes. "There's a tremendous amount that can be done without Congress," said Felicia Wong, who serves as an adviser on the Biden transition board but who was speaking in her capacity as head of the Roosevelt Institute, a progressive think tank."<sup>9</sup>

But at the heart of the matter, I think that Biden is unlikely to move the needle for the working class. That is not only because he is a member of the ruling class himself. But fundamentally it is because the whole ruling class share the same problems. These are of course painted as "America's problems" - by both Republicans and Democrats. I have previously argued that there were factional differences between sections of the ruling class of the USA. But on core issues they are as one: to maintain profits.<sup>10</sup>

And both wings recognise they have nowadays have one over-riding major problem as their economy stalls more and more. At core is the issue of *innovation*, in part driven by a need for reinvestment of profits into the sciences and re-tooling of industry. The USA has failed to keep up, as its greedy capitalists live the high life. In this, USA capitalists have one major problem - Chinese competition. This was a major area where Trump showed he would stand firm on. But Biden is - in fact - *no different*:

"To a considerable degree, Biden's advisers have come to share a pessimistic view of China's intentions that is not all that different from that of the Trump administration," said Aaron Friedberg, professor of politics and international Affairs at Princeton University.

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<sup>8</sup> Tom McCarthy, 7 November 2020, 'Rupert Murdoch-owned US outlets turn on Trump, urging him to act with 'grace', *The Observer* at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/nov/07/rupert-murdoch-owned-us-outlets-turn-on-trump-urging-him-to-concede-with-grace>

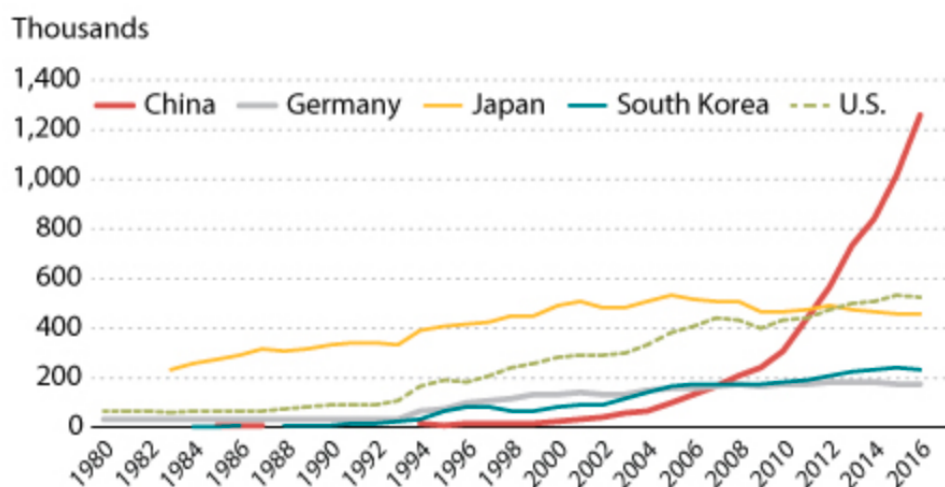
<sup>9</sup> Alan Rappeport, Jeanna Smialek, Ana Swanson and Jim Tankersley; Nov. 8, 2020; "In a Divided Washington, Biden Could Still Exert Economic Power"; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/08/us/politics/biden-economy.html>

<sup>10</sup> "What is Behind Trump – Is There Method Behind His Madness? Finance Capital and Industrial Capital – An Evolutionary History"; August 2019; <http://ml-today.com/2019/08/18/trump-finance-capital/>

“Although it will adopt different approaches in certain respects a Biden administration will not reverse the overall direction of US policy.”<sup>11</sup>

The data is quite clear. The number of Chinese patent applications has surged, as has the number of science and engineering (S&E) scientific papers.

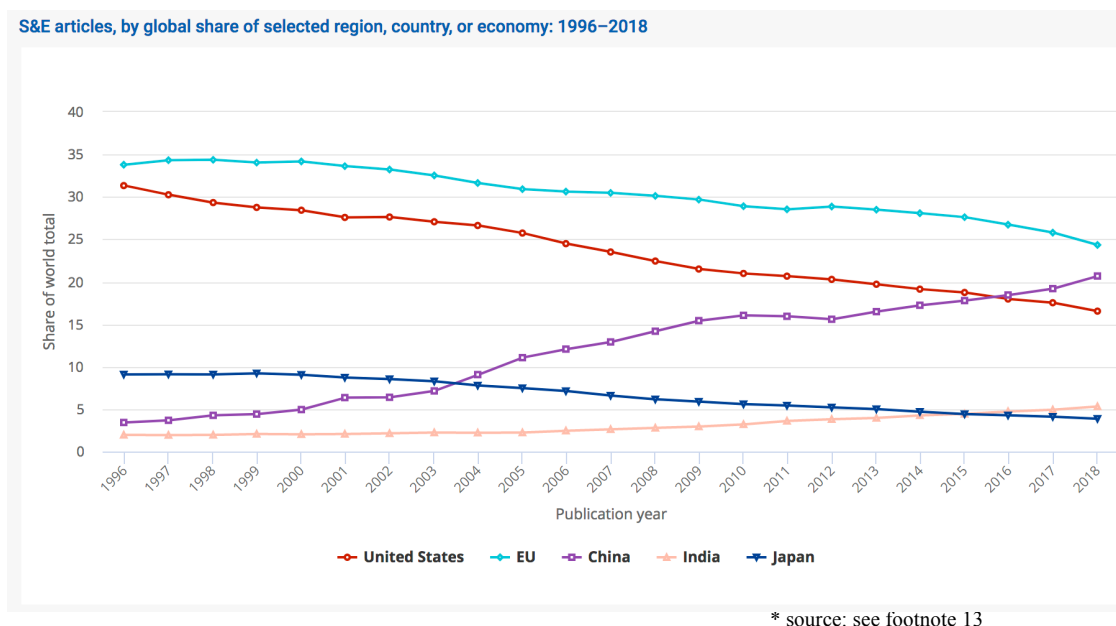
Figure 1  
A. Patent Applications, 1980-2016



\* source: see footnote 12

<sup>11</sup> Lily Kuo; 'His speech was perfect': Chinese social media users celebrate Biden win in Taipei; Mon 9 Nov 2020; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/09/his-speech-was-perfect-china-celebrates-biden-win-amid-hopes-for-warmer-ties>

<sup>12</sup> Ana Maria Santacreu and Heting Zhu What Does China's Rise in Patents Mean? A Look at Quality vs. Quantity Economic Research Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; 2018, No. 14; 2018-05-04 <https://research.stlouisfed.org/publications/economic-synopses/2018/05/04/what-does-chinas-rise-in-patents-mean-a-look-at-quality-vs-quantity/>



### 3. How divided is the left?

In the face of all this, what is the left in the USA up to? To be clear - I fully supported a broad anti-Trump coalition - and I would have voted for the Democratic Party – had I an eligible American vote. Disturbingly even some who call themselves Marxist-Leninists spurn the views of Lenin in rejecting voting in parliamentary elections. Yet at some level they themselves no doubt had some uncertainty. In fact I think it is extraordinary how on various left blogs, those who argued *against* voting for the Democrats, now express '*relief*' that Trump did not get back into legitimate power. But Biden will again – not make fundamental change for workers. As one left commentator - Vijay Prasad wrote:

"Biden will immediately do several sensible things — return to the WHO, return to the Paris deal, return to the Iran deal, cut the Muslim Ban, revive DACA. But he is on track to abandon the issues that are so central to the Democratic base — notably to fight for a higher minimum wage, to fight for a proper distribution of income, to fight for less military spending and for more spending on health, education and elder care. The Squad will be kept at arm's length, whereas the “moderate” Republicans will be taken seriously.”<sup>14</sup>

But the left outside of the Democratic Party appears to be completely unorganized. I am not even here talking about the Marxist-Leninist world, although it seems clear the same words apply. In total the 'Marxist' left outside of the Democratic Party is a tiny fraction, as compared to even any of the ginger groups within the Democratic Party.

These 'ginger groups' in my view, include the '*Democratic Socialists of America*'; '*Sunrise Movement*', '*Justice Democrats*', '*The Progressive Change Institute*', and the '*Congressional*

<sup>13</sup> *The National Science Board (Board)*; " *The State of U.S. Science and Engineering 2020*"; <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsb20206/publication-output-by-region-country-or-economy>; and: <https://www.leftbusinessobserver.com/Radio.html#S201105>; 5 November Vijay Prasad

<sup>14</sup> *Vijay Prasad: How seriously will Biden take 'the squad'?* *Daily Hampshire Gazette*; 9th Nov 2020. <https://www.gazettenet.com/Prasad-column-37225394>

*Progressive Caucus*'. Then of course there is the 'Squad' - of whom Prasad assesses they will be kept at 'arms length' by the Democratic party. In fact *Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez*, appears to fear this herself:

"For months, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has been a good soldier.... But on Saturday, in a nearly hourlong interview shortly after President-elect Biden was declared the winner, Ms. Ocasio-Cortez made clear the divisions within the party that animated the primary still exist. And she dismissed recent criticisms from some Democratic House members who have blamed the party's left for costing them important seats. Some of the members who lost, she said, had made themselves "sitting ducks."<sup>15</sup>

It is hardly surprising when you hear the rhetoric levelled against her and the 'Squad':

"We need to not ever use the word 'socialist' or 'socialism' ever again. . . . We lost good members because of that," Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-Va.), who narrowly leads in her reelection bid, said heatedly. "If we are classifying Tuesday as a success . . . we will get f---ing torn apart in 2022."<sup>16</sup>

In fact the 'Squaddies' are being made the 'scapegoat' for the less than massive electoral victory of the democrats:

### **"What went wrong for House Democrats when they were supposed to pick up seats?"**

I'm giving you an honest account of what I'm hearing from my own constituents, which is that they are extremely frustrated by the message of defunding the police and banning fracking. And I, as a Democrat, am just as frustrated. Because those things aren't just unpopular, they're completely unrealistic, and they aren't going to happen. And they amount to false promises by the people that call for them... Representative Ocasio-Cortez, she can put her name behind stuff and that's I guess courageous, but when it's a damaging idea or bad policy, like her tweeting out that fracking is bad in the middle of a presidential debate when we're trying to win western Pennsylvania — that's not being anything like a team player.<sup>17</sup>

The pushback from Squad members is poignant:

"So I need my colleagues to understand that we are not the enemy. And that their base is not the enemy. That the Movement for Black Lives is not the enemy, that Medicare for all is not the enemy. This isn't even just about winning an

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<sup>15</sup> Astead W. Herndon; Nov. 7, 2020 *Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on Biden's Win, House Losses, and What's Next for the Left*; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/07/us/politics/aoc-biden-progressives.html>

<sup>16</sup> Rachael Bade and Erica Werner, "Centrist House Democrats lash out at liberal colleagues, blame far-left views for costing the party seats. Spanberger criticizes Democrats' strategy in caucus call, *Washington Post* November 6 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Astead W. Herndon; Nov. 8, 2020; Conor Lamb, *House Moderate, on Biden's Win, 'the Squad' and the Future of the Democratic Party*"; at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/08/us/politics/conor-lamb-democrats-biden.html>

argument. It's that if they keep going after the wrong thing, I mean, they're just setting up their own obsolescence."<sup>18</sup>

"Rep. Rashida Talib (D-Mich.), a self-described democratic socialist, grew angry, accusing her colleagues of only being interested in appealing to White people in suburbia.

"To be real, it sounds like you are saying stop pushing for what Black folks want," she said."<sup>19</sup>

It is true that bigger guns have also made similar left statements, like for example *Bernie Sanders*. Pointing out correctly on November 3rd, just before the polls, that the defeat of Trump was a first step - he urged:

"We must have the courage to think big, not small," said Sanders, "and have the courage to envisage a very different kind of America and a very different set of national priorities."<sup>20</sup>

But Marxist-Leninists and any calling themselves Marxists, would argue Sanders' vision remains limited, since he has chosen to stay within the confines of the Democratic Party. Another ginger group, '*Our Revolution*', cautions:

"For those of us who focus on governance and economic and social justice, this election is a dismal rubber stamp of the unacceptable status quo," said Larry Cohen, the chairman of Our Revolution, a progressive group. "Black, brown and white working Americans see their hopes of real reform evaporate for now, even while cheering the victory over Trump."<sup>21</sup>

Actually Sanders' current vision appears to extend to being labor Secretary. Others fighting it out to be at 'the table' are also faces of the older complicit Democrats – as related by Ember<sup>15</sup> :

"Some.. have already expressed opposition to two of Mr. Biden's potential choices for Treasury secretary: Lael Brainard, a Federal Reserve governor, in part for her record on trade and currency manipulation in China; and Gov. Gina Raimondo of Rhode Island, a former venture capitalist, whose overhaul of her state's public pension system made her deeply unpopular with some labor unions. Instead, many liberals are pushing Mr. Biden both in private and public to name Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts to the position.. Others on the progressives' shortlist for the position include Sarah Bloom

<sup>18</sup> Astead W. Herndon; Nov. 7, 2020 Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on Biden's Win, House Losses, and What's Next for the Left"; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/07/us/politics/aoc-biden-progressives.html>

<sup>19</sup> Rachael Bade and Erica Werner, "Centrist House Democrats lash out at liberal colleagues, blame far-left views for costing the party seats. Spanberger criticizes Democrats' strategy in caucus call, Washington Post November 6 2020

<sup>20</sup> Jake Johnson, 'Defeating Trump is necessary as a first step, but we cannot and must not go back to business as usual.'. Calling Biden Victory Over Trump Step One, Sanders Says US 'Must Not Go Back to Business as Usual'; Common Dreams; at: [https://www.commondreams.org/news/2020/11/03/calling-biden-victory-over-trump-step-one-sanders-says-us-must-not-go-back-business?cd-origin=rss&utm\\_term=AO&utm\\_campaign=Daily%20Newsletter&utm\\_content=email&utm\\_source=Daily%20Newsletter&utm\\_medium=Email](https://www.commondreams.org/news/2020/11/03/calling-biden-victory-over-trump-step-one-sanders-says-us-must-not-go-back-business?cd-origin=rss&utm_term=AO&utm_campaign=Daily%20Newsletter&utm_content=email&utm_source=Daily%20Newsletter&utm_medium=Email)

<sup>21</sup> Sydney Ember, Nov. 9, 2020, "Treasury Secretary Warren? Progressives Line Up to Press Their Agenda on Biden"; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/07/us/politics/progressives-biden-warren.html>



Raskin, who served as deputy secretary of the Treasury under President Barack Obama, and Janet Yellen, the former chair of the Federal Reserve."

**Conclusion:**

When the Democratic Party had a mandate with President Obama, they did not launch an offensive against capital. They will not do so now, under much more tenuous circumstances. It is likely the Democratic Party will finally splinter. Its role for Capital, to act as a faced for that section of workers who are becoming conscious of their class role, is clearly severely eroded.

Regardless of the dogfights within the Democratic Party, a new party is needed. What is needed is a true working class party. There is nothing like that worthy of a Eugene Debs - the great American socialist. Of course a Marxist-Leninist party would be good... Very little signs of that in my view. A broader left front, must be a goal for the short to medium term for all progressives in the USA. Perhaps I should be even plainer about my view. In the meantime the Marxist-Leninists must swim with the other fish in the ocean of politics. If that means within the Democratic Party ginger groups - it is on those who dispute this to argue why this is incorrect.