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OPINION | WONDER LAND

## *The Democrats' Ritualistic Stoning of Brett Kavanaugh*

If Joe Biden wins, the left will use the same tactics against his presidency.

By Daniel Henninger

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For years, an enduring story line of American politics was that “the far right” was taking over the Grand Old Party of Dwight D. Eisenhower, Ronald Reagan and the Bush family. Then Donald Trump, a political idiosyncrasy running as a Republican, blew up the right-wing takeover.

Today we have a more relevant story line: The Democratic Party of Woodrow Wilson, FDR, JFK, Bill Clinton—even Barack Obama—is being taken over by the far left.



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### Smearing Brett Kavanaugh Again

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Unlike the presumed capture of the Republicans by a mishmash of disorganized groups and intellectuals, the Democrats today are making the

public's perception of their party easier by defining themselves from now until Election Day with their treatment of one person— Brett Kavanaugh.

Within hours of publication of the New York Times's tissue-thin piece on Justice Kavanaugh's years at Yale, a succession of Democratic presidential candidates posted denunciations on social media.

Elizabeth Warren: “Like the man who appointed him, Kavanaugh should be impeached.”

Kamala Harris: “He must be impeached.”

Beto O'Rourke: “He should be impeached.”

Julián Castro: "He should be impeached."

Bernie Sanders: "I support any appropriate constitutional mechanism to hold him accountable."

Impeachment, until now, has been a grave step in the American political process. But impeachment has become like popcorn for Democrats. They can't get enough of it.

This extraordinary exercise in instantaneous groupthink by so many of the party's presidential candidates is disturbing. There are several ways to interpret it, and the first requires diving to untouched depths of cynicism.

By midevening Sunday, the Times had issued a clarification of the original piece by two of the paper's staff writers, Robin Pogrebin and Kate Kelly. In what now appears to be an editing fiasco of historic proportions (almost on a scale with the Washington Post's epic and must-read correction of a recent piece about racism in the paper's food section), the Times acknowledged that the woman involved in the purported Kavanaugh episode "declined to be interviewed and friends say that she does not recall the incident."

But Democrats seem to live in a political world now whose standard of proof for judicial confirmations or any public-policy proposal is "whatever." On Monday morning, well after the Times's clarification of the original piece, the Harris campaign sent out an email grinding through "Brett Kavanaugh's illegitimate nomination." Then it asked for money: "Can you add a contribution of any amount to Kamala's campaign?" The short distance from moral high horse to money grovel is breathtaking.

About 3 p.m., Mr. Castro asked the people on his email distribution list to sign a self-promoting "emergency petition calling for Brett Kavanaugh's removal."

Still, something more serious than back-alley political cynicism is reflected in the statements from these Democratic presidential candidates. An issue raised by the entire Kavanaugh process is whether the Democratic Party as defined by its current generation of party activists is willing to conduct politics outside any conceivable definition of acceptable behavior.

Justice Kavanaugh was confirmed by a Senate vote nearly a year ago after a hearing process of unprecedented political bitterness. This New York Times article and the piling on by five Democratic presidential candidates amount to a ritualistic stoning of Brett Kavanaugh. If the established system doesn't go their way, they'll conduct politics outside the system. Whatever it takes.

The day after Donald Trump's victory in 2016, left-wing activists took over streets throughout Manhattan and shut down commuter traffic. It always

struck me as a telling event, insofar as most of the New York workers these activists were shafting voted for Hillary Clinton. But their point was clear: We'll disrupt and even smash the system when we want to. This is becoming the ethos—a politics without norms or boundaries—that now defines the Democratic Party.

An argument against such a dire interpretation is that the activists' anything-goes politics is precisely what is at stake in the struggle between the party's left and "moderates" such as Joe Biden and Amy Klobuchar. I'm not sure I believe that now, and the reason is Minnesota's Sen. Klobuchar.

After the Times piece appeared Saturday and her fellow candidates outpatted their serial impeachment demands, Ms. Klobuchar somehow felt compelled to say the Kavanaugh confirmation "process was a sham." This from a candidate who has tried, like Mr. Biden, to present herself as the adult in the room. That Ms. Klobuchar caved says a lot about the requirements of party membership now.

It raises the question of how real the whole "moderate" Democratic phenomenon is, or whether Ms. Warren has accurately identified the party's near-term future—progressivism without nuance or quarter.

If Mr. Biden somehow got elected, the pressure from the far left to conform his administration's policy to its agenda would be overwhelming and relentless. That's the lesson of the Kavanaugh stoning. Today Brett Kavanaugh, tomorrow whoever gets in the way, including a moderate Democratic president.

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