

## *Who or What Exactly Is Running Against Trump?*

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As we enter the final 90 days of the November presidential campaign, a few truths are crystalizing about the “Biden problem,” or the inability of a 77-year-old Joe Biden to conduct a “normal” campaign.

Biden’s cognitive challenges are increasing geometrically, whether as a result of months of relative inactivity and lack of stimulation or just consistent with the medical trajectory of his affliction. His lot is increasingly similar to historical figures such as 67-year-old President William Henry Harrison, William Gladstone’s last tenure as prime minister, Chancellor Hindenburg, or Franklin Roosevelt in late 1944—age and physical infirmities signaling to the concerned that a subordinate might assume power sooner than later.

In the past, it was to Biden’s advantage to postpone his selection of his female-mandated vice presidential running mate, given the lose-lose choice of either picking a woke young African American female who may polarize swing voters while spending the next three months being vetted in the fashion of California Representative Karen Bass’s Scientology and Fidel Castro issues, or selecting a vetted, but off-putting former National Security Advisor Susan Rice or Senator Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), who does not especially like Biden and would be seen as hovering and rummaging about as an impatient president-in-waiting. Biden, remember, is one of the few primary candidates in history who promised in advance to pick a running mate on the basis of gender and, as events would dictate, and by inference, race as well.

But now there seems an additional urgency to select a running mate, given the Democratic ticket is a construct, with no visible or viable presidential candidate. While traditional polls show a sizable Biden lead, at some point voters will want more than the current contest of Trump alone versus the media, the virus, the lockdown, the economy, and the rioting. But so far, it remains a one-person race, in the fashion of Clint Eastwood’s weird 2012 Republican National Convention appearance speaking to an empty chair.

### Perceiving the Inner Biden

So we are witnessing a campaign never before experienced in American history and not entirely attributable to the plague and quarantine. After all, the fellow septuagenarian Trump, with his own array of medical challenges, insists upon frenetic and near-constant public appearances. His opponent is a non-candidate conducting a non-campaign that demands we ask the question, **who exactly is drafting the Biden**

agenda and strategy? Or, rather, who or what is Biden, if not a composite cat's paw of an anonymous left-wing central committee?

When Biden speaks for more than a few minutes without a script or a minder in his basement, the results are often racist of the sort in the Black Lives Matter era that otherwise would be rightly damned and called out as disqualifying. If his inner racist persona continues to surface, Biden's insensitivities threaten to expose a muzzled BLM as a mere transparent effort to grab power rather than to address "systemic racism" of the sort the exempt Biden seems to exude.

Biden needs the minority vote in overwhelming numbers, as he realized in his late comeback in the primaries. But the continuance of his often angry, unapologetic racist nonsense suggests that his cognitive issues trump his political sense of self-control.

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For Biden, if any African American doesn't vote for him, then "*you ain't black*"—a charge fired back at black podcaster with near venom. Biden more calmly assures us, in his all-knowing Bideneque wisdom, that Americans can't tell Asians in general apart—channeling the ancient racist trope that "*they all look alike*."

In his scrambled sociology, blacks are unimaginatively monolithic politically, while Latinos are diverse and more flexible. Biden seems to have no notion that "*Latino*" is a sort of construct to encompass everyone from a Brazilian aristocrat to an immigrant from the state of Oaxaca, and not comparable to the more inclusive and precise term "*African American*." Moreover, while the black leadership in Congress may be politically monolithic, there are millions of blacks who oppose abortion, defunding the police, and illegal immigration. The best minds of the conservative intellectual and political movement so often are African Americans.

When asked questions, Biden's answers so often reveal racist subtexts. A few days ago, CBS reporter Errol Barnett, who is black, asked Biden whether he would take a cognitive assessment exam. Biden fired back to him that such an unfair question would be as if he had asked Barnett whether he was getting tested for cocaine before going live. "*That's like saying,*" a perturbed Biden exclaimed to Barnett, "*before you got on this program, you're taking a test whether you're taking cocaine or not . . . What do you think, huh? Are you a junkie?*" Note the tell-tale Biden trademark of racist insinuation delivered with punk-like braggadocio.

Note, too, Biden's racist assumption that an African American professional journalist might be likely to be defensive about being a cocaine addict. Yet Biden should know—from the drug struggles of Hunter Biden—that cocaine is in fact the favorite drug of the white elite.

### Mental Lapses as Force Multipliers

The problem is that in the past, a cognizant Biden was already racially edgy with his various earlier-career riffs about inner-city criminals, blue-collar chest-thumping about busing, and his more recent ideas about donut shops, accomplished black professionals on the verge of returning to slave status (“*put y’all back in chains*”), his racist descriptions of candidate Obama’s supposedly exceptional personal hygiene and ability to speak well, his corn-pop braggadocio, and on and on. His mental lapses now serve as force multipliers and accelerants of the old Biden’s foot-in-mouth disease and render him often a caricature of a racist.

Politically, the point is not that he will not win the majority of minority voters, but rather that he won’t win enough of them at a margin necessary that carrying large swing-state cities such as Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Detroit, Cleveland, and others, will make up for the likely loss of rural areas and working-class whites, supposedly the “clingers” that “good ’ole Joe from Scranton” was supposed to own.

Even more disturbing, the media simply is unconcerned about Biden’s racial putdowns, stereotyping, and uncomfortableness with the proverbial “*other*.” And the more the inner-Biden racist sounds off, the more ridiculous such contextualizing becomes and the less people listen when journalists and activists spout off about a systemically racist America.

Recently, when Biden has attempted to speak without prompts, indeed to clear up “*rumors*” of his cognitive problems, he simply loses his train of thought and utters a series of unstructured and unsettled thoughts that refute the very premise of his interview. The understandable Democratic strategy is to run out the clock and to choreograph a few post-Labor Day public appearances, to outsource campaigning to his running mate and future cabinet secretaries, and then to hope, in the manner of a 2016 Hillary Clinton, that he has amassed a large enough September lead to outlast a closing October Trump campaign.

There are problems with such a strategy, as we saw in 2016. If Biden late in the campaign stumbles in the debates, there is no post-convention remedy to reassure the public he is *compos mentis* or otherwise can be replaced by a majority consensus. Then the country would be entering something eerily similar to, but far graver than, the McGovern debacle of desperately looking for a new running mate after it was disclosed that an apparently perfectly cognizant Tom Eagleton—his running-mate for 18 days—had undergone two electric shock treatments in his past as well as undisclosed prior hospitalizations for bipolar disorder.

Biden’s Race Against Time

Right now, the Democrats have a virtual campaign and a virtual candidate and a strategy of running against the Trump news cycle.

That may work, but it assumes Americans under quarantine don't mind that they do not really know who is the Democratic challenger, or that Biden is, in fact, not physically or mentally able to function as either a candidate or president. It also assumes that the Trump-owned news cycle will remain as dismal over the next three months as it has the last five or six weeks, and that the virus will spike in late October again, rather than slowly burn out as it seems to be doing in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe.

Add it all up and the question is no longer whether Biden could fulfill the duties of the presidency but whether he can finish a traditional campaign over the next three months—without outsourcing his duties to a committee, or serially saying something blatantly racist, or simply disappearing to the nether world of his basement where saying nothing beats saying anything.