

# Democrats and the Myth of Change

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Change has become the centerpiece of the Democratic Party's caucuses/primaries on the way in choosing the Party's Presidential nominee. The word change inundates all the front runners' stump speeches; Barack Obama has made it a symbol of his platform for change and Hillary Clinton uses it to "help make history". The recent frenzied caucuses have been called a dog fight, horse race, comedy, and sack race, and have involved the public beyond all expectations of the pundits by capturing the hopes and emotions of the party faithful and the nation as well. The Republican candidates vying for their party's nomination for President resemble a cauldron of extremists, who offer with some variations the Bush doctrine. But make no mistake. As far as domestic and foreign policies are concerned there are no significant deviations between each party in the mother of all popularity contests. Both parties (and therefore all candidates, despite their rhetoric) support unabashedly, the fundamentals of US domestic and foreign policy, i.e. neoliberal globalization, keeping control by any means available of Middle East Oil (which means that, despite variations on tactics, they all believe in keeping control of Iraq, Afghanistan and directly or indirectly of Iran), the bogus war on "terror" and the Bandustanization of Palestine. Hillary has unwaveringly fought for Israel's right to exist peacefully and to defend its people against "terrorism" (as she calls the resistance and struggle against the occupiers!) while condemning Hamas' gaining power through a democratic election that was in line with the recommendations of the West. Hillary and Obama facilitate the Zionists' turning of Palestine into killing fields.

At the same time, Barack Obama portrays himself as the instrument of change by offering to alter the semantics rather than the essence of policy, i.e. from one of bully, disunity, lies, and secrecy to one of openness, integrity, reconciliation and unity. In other words he proposes to undo the damage inflicted by Bush on America's facade and restore America's image as torch bearer of freedom and decency. Obama's demeanor is non-provoking which promises a compassionate liberalism. Even though Barack campaigns for change, he is a typical liberal democrat, who hopes people will find in him someone who will focus on solving their problems. Obama although, presents a caveat that change is not easy. Referring to the status quo he warns, "The real gamble is to have the same old folks doing the same old things over and over again, and somehow expect a different result."<sup>[1]</sup> Peppering his stump speeches with phrases like, "you can do it", "yes we can", "against all odds" Obama asserts to represent the aspirations of common people, to mobilize their shared desires "for honesty, truth, straight talk, and change from bottom up."

If Obama is advertised as the advocate for change standing against the status quo, Hillary Clinton represents the status quo. Beside the fact that her official website is titled, "Help Make History", endeavoring to be the first woman President and being the driving force for change, she is a fan of reaction against even progressive social change. In her stint as First Lady she was instrumental in working with the insurance and pharmaceutical industries in destroying health care in this country. Now she has a plan

that would ensure health care coverage for all Americans by lowering costs and improving quality (the usual neoliberal mantra) rather than by taxing the rich to finance a proper health system for all. She also took part in Bill Clinton's dismantling of the welfare state when in August 1996, following his promise during his 1992 presidential campaign to "end welfare as we know it", Bill Clinton signed the workfare law requiring the states to push welfare recipients into jobs—a typical neoliberal measure. As a result, workfare, further broke down dysfunctional families and forced more people into poverty. Workfare failed to produce much permanent employment and deprived children of proper care. Workfare amounts to slave wages and impoverishment. So Hillary is a typical exponent of the ideology of neoliberal globalization, as indicated also by the fact that one of her favorite Presidents, as well as Obama's, is Ronald Reagan, whom along with M. Thatcher inaugurated the worldwide neoliberal consensus. Hillary thinks she possesses communicating skills comparable to the former president. Hillary desires to be the leader who will restore America's reputation in the world and take America in the right direction by promoting neoliberal aims, ensuring security, and pressing forward market values. Her commitment to progressive causes is a front that will help get her elected.

Yes, the politically ignorant Americans hope to see history being made with an Obama or Hillary presidency. But, let us not be fooled. Obama and Hillary as professional politicians, did not become members of the elite club, the US Senate, by bucking the System. No one does! Both Senators have continually voted yea on funding the Iraq occupation. Beyond the litany of populist phrases of hope and change a closer look at the advisors with whom Obama and Hillary surround themselves reveals their elitist bent.

In a recent *Democracy Now*<sup>[2]</sup> interview Allan Nairn cited several former US officials as major advisors to Obama. One is Zbigniew Brzezinski, who has claimed many times to have initiated the worldwide jihadi network to defeat the Soviet occupiers of Afghanistan. As is well known Osama bin Laden sharpened his teeth in Brzezinski's jihadist struggle. Another Obama advisor is Air Force General Merrill McPeak, who oversaw delivery of US attack jets to Indonesia during and after its invasion of East Timor in 1991. Another important advisor is Dennis Ross, who has advised Bill Clinton and the two Bushes as a Middle East negotiator for US policy toward Israel and Palestine. Ross pressed that the legal rights of the Palestinians, documented as rights under international law, "must be subordinated to the needs of the Israeli government." A former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense official for peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance during the Clinton administration also advises Obama. Sarah Sewall last year wrote the Introduction to General Petraeus' Marine Corps/Army counterinsurgency manual published by the University of Chicago. The manual is "now being used worldwide by US troops in various killing operations." Sewall is currently employed at Harvard University's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy. She is part of a trend of the intelligentsia who would collaborate in an illegal occupation, suppression of armed resistance, and torture. Another policy advisor is Anthony Lake, who was the central character in the invasion of Haiti during the Clinton presidency in which Aristide was forcibly removed from office in an American inspired coup and the consequent IMF/World Bank "renovation" of the Haitian economy that brought "an increase in malnutrition deaths among Haitians and set the stage for the current ongoing political disaster in Haiti." These are some of the people Obama rolls with and proves that on policy issues he cannot come up with major change.

Hillary's advisors, according to Nairn, consist of many officials in her hubby's administration.<sup>[3]</sup> One is Madeline Albright, Clinton's infamous sociopath and terrorist

Secretary of State, who was the cheerleader for sanctions against Iraq that led to the death of 1,000,000 Iraqi people including 500,000 children. Another is Wesley Clark who was in charge of bombing Yugoslavia into submission, so that the transnational elite's aim to fully integrate the country into the new world order through its disintegration could be achieved<sup>[4]</sup>. He took care that even civilian targets were bombed. Richard Holbrooke from the Carter administration oversaw the shipment of weapons to the Indonesian military as they were illegally invading East Timor and killing a third of the population. He also kept the UN Security Council from enforcing its resolution against the invasion. Strobe Talbott is another advisor during the Clinton administration, who oversaw Russia policy, a backing of Yeltsin's policies, which resulted in the "catastrophe of marketization" and the turning over of the national wealth to the liberal oligarchs.<sup>[5]</sup> There are also other backers of the Iraq invasion, occupation, and escalation such as General Jack Keane.

Of course, the inter-relationships between Presidential candidates and the political and economic elites do not exhaust themselves with the "advisors" assigned to them. It is in fact these links with the elites which determine at the end who will be the winners in the primaries/caucuses and, ultimately, will get to the White House. The system, very simply, works as follows. The candidacy is a "product", like any other product to be sold to the consumers (i.e. the citizens). Given that all 'products' are similar (as we saw there are no significant differences between the electoral programs of both parties and therefore between all candidates), the winning product is bound to be the one with the best marketing, i.e. the one which appeals to major sections of the electorate not on the basis of non-existent substantive policy differences but, instead, on the basis of irrelevant personal characteristics (race, gender, sex appeal, etc.). However, given the nature of the product, direct advertising is not enough, and the backing of the local and national mass media is required, which can offer indirect advertising. Adequate, therefore, corporate finance as well as strong backing by the economic and political elites which control the mass media are the necessary conditions for any candidate to survive the primaries. The sufficient condition however, for a candidate to win the party's nomination and particularly the presidency itself, clearly depends on the dealings of these candidates with the economic and political elites, i.e. the candidate who in this auction offers most to these elites and at the same time is trusted more by them that s/he would be able to deliver will win the ultimate prize.

So, campaign financing is a sack race to see who can raise sacks and sacks of money, and so far there is no dearth of donations. The money is pouring in to all candidates. As Stephen Foley observes in the Independent, money is flowing from an open spigot into the coffers of the chop licking barons of the ad industry including the mass media and marketing firms. "Advertising and market spending by this field of wannabe presidents," he reports, "could have come in at \$150 million at the low end of original forecasts, is now certain to top \$200 million before a coronation, and could reach \$250 million if the free-for-all is not settled on 5 February—the so-called 'tsunami Tuesday' when more than 20 states are polled."<sup>[6]</sup> In fact, his numbers are far more conservative. Sheila Krumholz has intimated in a *Democracy Now*<sup>[7]</sup> interview that even though the numbers are not yet in for the fourth quarter, campaign financing for all candidates could go as high as \$500 million. The candidates are accepting money from any source, who are placing their bets in the sack race, whether it is from industries such as real estate, defense, oil, pharmaceuticals, etc., or law firms, Wall Street securities and other special interests. By the time the election rolls around in November total campaign spending could reach an astounding \$1.9 billion dollars. This is chicken feed compared to the cost of the Iraq and Afghanistan occupations which currently run \$8-9 billion per month. And yet, this \$1.9 billion dollars, instead of being wasted for the marketing of

the “products” could be better spent on:

- 422,054 people who have no health care, OR
- 2,602,075 new homes built with renewable energy, OR
- 190,723 scholarships for university students, OR
- 140 new elementary schools built, OR
- 460,199 children who need healthcare insurance, OR
- 33,331 new elementary school teachers hired.

As far as “change” is concerned it is worth recalling that the Democrats were elected and took over both houses in the 2006 Congressional races as they touted themselves agents of change. They were given a mandate to get out of Iraq and impeach Bush, but as Nancy Pelosi famously pronounced immediately after taking over Congress, “Impeachment is off the table”, and Congress has given Bush everything he has wanted from money to continue the illegal and brutal occupation of Iraq to repressive laws and cut backs in basic social services at home that increases enormous economic inequality. Bill Clinton promised if elected to change the miserable health care system. And what happened? The insurance and pharmaceutical industries gained enormous profits and health care system is broken. Bush claimed that he did not want to get into nation building. So what does he do? He invades, murders, and plunders Iraq so that he can rebuild it not for democracy, but for the transnational economic and political elite, that is, to bring Iraq into the New World Order.

Voting out of office Republicans and their neo-conservative acolytes, Obama tells us, will bring the US back on the road to respect. This is a fallacy as we have seen. Changing the actors without changing the systemic causes of the crisis, i.e. the concentration of political and economic power at the hands of elites, as expressed by neoliberal globalization and the present representative “democracy” will change nothing. Exchanging the Bush doctrine with a multilateral foreign policy will only insure that members of the transnational elite rather than the Bush cabal alone will make the decisions. Elections, besides being a huge waste of time and resources, are not democratic. Elections are the quintessential institution of hierarchy. One person one vote is an illusion as obviously the vote of a window cleaner does not count the same as the vote of the director of a publishing conglomerate or Bill Gates! The huge inequality in the distribution of political and economic power is obviously reflected in each vote, as it was shown above. Furthermore, as many people realizing that their vote does not count for anything and whoever wins nothing changes in their lives (and consequently do not take part in the election process) a majority of the people do not vote. The result is that the election outcome is determined by something like 28% of the people!

None of the Democratic candidates can be trusted to fundamentally change the systemic causes of the multidimensional crisis, i.e. the market economy and representative “democracy.” Their work is to continually secure, like their counterparts, the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of the elites. In order to change society, people have to start building a mass political movement for a real democracy: a movement that will begin the process of building the new democratic institutions which would secure political and economic equality and at the same time leads to the changing of their thinking habits and political consciousness. With Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton fancying to restore the American Dream, either presidency like that of the other candidates will continue implementing the dictates of the growth ideology that widens the schism between the haves and have nots. Do not be fooled by the Democrats comedic sincerity. Their focus is to ease the pain—a dog cannot turn into a cat, or the comedy of politics is the tragedy of polity.

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[1] Claudia Parsons, “Obama says New Hampshire loss shows change not easy”, *Reuters*, January 9, 2008. In the debate Tuesday the 15<sup>th</sup> Obama said he supports withholding federal funds to colleges and universities which do not allow military recruiters or ROTC on their campuses. Not only that, but he did not say a word about inviting peace or anti-war groups on campuses to present critical and alternate views to the military swindle.

[2] Amy Goodman, “[Vote For Change? Atrocity-Linked U.S. Officials Advising Democratic, GOP Presidential Frontrunners](#)”, *Democracy Now*, January 3, 2008.

[3] Ibid.

[4] see Takis Fotopoulos, “[The First War of the Internationalised Market Economy](#)”, *Democracy & Nature*, (Volume 5 Number 2, July 1999).

[5] see Takis Fotopoulos, “[The Catastrophe of Marketization](#)”, *Democracy & Nature*, (Volume 5 Number 2, July 1999).

[6] Stephen Foley, “US president: The great \$2bn vote race”, *Independent*, 13 January 2008.

[7] Amy Goodman, “[How Do Front-Loading the Primary Calendar and Record Campaign Spending Affect the 2008 Race?](#)”, *Democracy Now*, January 8, 2008.