

Donald Trump Has More Fans Than You Might Think

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The polls show Donald Trump losing to Joe Biden by a wide margin, and yet the president seems to have more support than many might think. And I'm not just talking about Americans afraid of being "cancelled" if they express a politically incorrect opinion such as support for Trump—although a recent poll by the Cato Institute did reveal that 62 percent of Americans are now fearful of publicly expressing their opinions.

Indeed, Trump might have some fans that do a *really* good job of hiding their affection for him. I'm talking, of course, about Antifa, the folks smashing up cities, most notably, Portland and Seattle. They could yet prove to be Trump's most potent supporters.

A ridiculous assertion? Well, consider the words of Democratic stalwart Lanny Davis, tweeting on July 27: "Violent protesters lighting fires and using violence in Portland should wear @realDonaldTrump buttons. That is who they are helping. Progressives in Portland need to call them out, including the Mayor. ReTweet please. Don't allow violent people help @realDonaldTrump."

Back on June 4, here at *TAC*, this author made precisely that argument: that Antifa wanted to Trump to win a second term, following the revolutionary Leninist dictum of "the worse the better." That is, Trump is the figure that Antifa wants in power, because in its view, the incumbent heightens the contradictions of capitalism, white supremacy, and cis-patriarchy.

By contrast, Biden is the sort of consensus-minded figure that could reduce the general level of societal anger—and that, of course, would be bad news for Antifa.

Indeed, in the preferred scenario of partisan and pragmatic Democrats such as Lanny Davis, a President Biden would accommodate enough of the left's agenda, so that most leftists would be happy, thereby isolating Antifa on the fringe. As a result, Biden would preside happily over the center-left.

To be sure, Republicans say that Biden as the 46th president would cave in to Antifa craziness; and yet that wasn't the story of his presidential campaign, in which he took on the left, albeit in muted terms—but then, the future is always unknowable.

Yet in the meantime, an emerging fear of Democrats—joined, now, by many ex-Republicans supporting Biden—is that Antifa's antics will keep Biden from getting elected.

For instance, here's Steve Schmidt, who has traversed from supporting John McCain to supporting Howard Schultz (remember his short-lived independent presidential campaign?) to now supporting Biden: "This violence is a criminal act and destroys the moral legitimacy of the important messages that peaceful protesters are in the street for. It desecrates the memory and affronts the grave of the late American Hero John Lewis and it helps Trump."

Schmidt's denunciation led sly pundit Mickey Kaus to ask about the street-fighting, "If these guys can no longer pretend it's not happening . . . Has Schmidt maybe seen some polling on the violence?"

Indeed, there's some evidence that Antifa is driving a wedge inside the Democratic coalition—and that wedging could hurt Biden's chances. For instance, in a report on the ongoing of violence in Seattle, CBS News reported the reaction of one victim: "Daryl Breaux, whose car was seriously damaged in the melee, said those using the demonstrations as cover for mayhem are drowning out the positive meaning of the protests. 'Almost 45 years I've been Black. This is what Black Lives Matter does? I'm not with it.'"

In fact, the split between mostly white Antifa types and blacks and others angry at the police—but who are not seeking a new Bolshevik revolution—seems to be widening. Here's Naveed Jamali, an avowed progressive: "I'm a POC who lives in Seattle and has been covering these protests. They have less and less to do with George Floyd or #BlackLivesMatter. It's a shame, but this movement for equality has been hijacked."

Indeed, E.D. Mondainé, president of the Portland branch of the NAACP, headlined his op-ed in *The Washington Post*, "Portland's protests were supposed to be about black lives. Now, they're white spectacle." As Mondainé put it, "As the demonstrations continue every night in Portland, many people with their own agendas are co-opting, and distracting attention from, what should be our central concern: the Black Lives Matter movement." Asking, "What are antifa and other leftist agitators achieving for the cause of black equality?" Mondainé had a blunt answer: *nothing*.

As of now, it's hard to show that this division is actually costing Biden votes, but plenty of Biden supporters are worried—after all, it's still more than three months till Election Day. MSNBC host Joe Scarborough, who, way back when, won four elections as a Republican Congressman, recently tweeted, "How does breaking windows at a courthouse, setting fire to a federal building, firing guns in crowds, and committing acts of vandalism forward any cause?" Scarborough is referring, of course, to liberal and progressive causes; he's choosing to ignore Antifa's cause.

Of course, for its part, as its hazy agenda would indicate, Antifa has its own ideas. After all, if its goal is active and demonstrative "self-defense" against the imagined threats of fascism and Nazism, then it's not so easy to corral it within the Democratic Party, or even within the norms of the democratic process.

Yet in the meantime, of course, Trump is eager to conflate Biden, the Democrats, and Antifa. The president has said, in fact, that Biden will be a "puppet" of the radical left," and so, if he wins, "nobody will be safe." If Trump could truly make that charge stick, he would, in fact, likely win the election.

Indeed, Trump is always upping the ante. Just on July 27, he tweeted, "Anarchists, Agitators or Protestors who vandalize or damage our Federal Courthouse in Portland, or any Federal

Buildings in any of our Cities or States, will be prosecuted under our recently re-enacted Statues & Monuments Act. MINIMUM TEN YEARS IN PRISON.”

Here, Trump is referring not to an act of Congress, but rather to a June 26 Executive Order, parts of which read like a campaign speech, viz:

Anarchists and left-wing extremists have sought to advance a fringe ideology that paints the United States of America as fundamentally unjust and have sought to impose that ideology on Americans through violence and mob intimidation. They have led riots in the streets, burned police vehicles, killed and assaulted government officers as well as business owners defending their property, and even seized an area within one city where law and order gave way to anarchy. During the unrest, innocent citizens also have been harmed and killed.

So it would seem that candidate Biden needs to distance himself from Antifa. That is, he needs a “Sister Souljah” moment, recalling the time during the 1992 presidential campaign when Bill Clinton used a majorly symbolic speech venue—appearing before Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition—to separate himself from a black rapper who had called for killing white people. That November, Clinton won the election in a landslide.

Applying the Sister Souljah dynamic to today, Biden would condemn Antifa, making it clear that, during his presidency, maniacal violence would not be tolerated. Were Biden to do so in a loud and steady voice, he would greatly reassure Middle America—to say nothing of easing the angst of prominent supporters Davis, Schmidt, and Scarborough.

Yet here’s the thing: *Biden hasn’t done that yet.* Maybe he will, but he hasn’t yet. Yes, on July 28, Biden denounced “arsonists and anarchists,” while mostly, of course, attacking Trump. Thus he has yet to make a full-throated denunciation of Antifa by name, making it plain that under his presidential leadership, the violence would be stopped.

So what’s the holdup? What’s the blockage? Why isn’t Biden going full Sister Souljah on Antifa?

The answer could have something to do with the changing nature of the Democratic Party. Back in 1992, when Clinton Sister Souljah-ed Sister Souljah, the party still had much of its traditional Dixie orientation, including presidential campaign buttons boasting the Confederate stars and bars. Indeed, in 1994, President Clinton signed Joe Biden’s tough anti-crime bill, and in 1996, Clinton signed right-wing welfare reform legislation, which Biden voted for. As we can gather, for the Democratic Party of the Clinton era, slamming Antifa would have been a no-brainer.

Yet a quarter-century later, the party has changed. In July 2018, in the wake of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s upset victory in a New York Democratic primary, this author speculated that AOC, as she’s now universally known, would push the Democrats to the hard left. In addition, last year, this author also noted the “McGovernization” of the Democratic Party, referring back to an earlier lurch to the left. Indeed, earlier this month, I wondered aloud whether the Democrats would be able to separate themselves from their “summer of love.”

So maybe that’s why Biden is so quiet. Nobody thinks that he himself supports Antifa, but maybe his strategists think that he must walk a fine line, such that he doesn’t seem to tolerating violence and yet, at the same time, doesn’t seem to be siding with Trump. Great politicians walk fine lines for a living—so now we’ll have to see about Biden.

Because in the meantime, the violence rages, not just in Portland and Seattle, but in just about every big city in the country. And if the violence continues, the words of Elon Musk, a man of indeterminate political views, will seem all the more true: “The left is losing the middle.”

Of course, if the left loses the middle, if more chaos ensues, and if Trump gets re-elected, that’s just fine with Antifa.