



Democratic Party Unity Remains a Challenge for Hillary Clinton

By Joe Macaron

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The Democratic Party confirmed on July 26 the candidacy of Hillary Clinton, making her the first female presidential nominee of a major party in American political history. However, despite the show of unity with her former opponent Senator Bernie Sanders during the roll call vote of the nomination process in Philadelphia, questions are looming large on Clinton's ability to galvanize the party's left wing during the national elections on November 8, 2016.

Two challenges during the four-day Democratic Convention in Philadelphia this week will define the parameters of Clinton's national campaign moving forward. First, whether the Democratic Party establishment will put to rest the skepticism and anger of the party's left wing; and second, how will Hillary Clinton reintroduce herself to the American people in her acceptance speech on July 28.

Unlike eight years ago, when then candidate Barack Obama challenged the powerful Clinton machine, this time around a united Democratic establishment was perceived as conspiring to silence dissenting voices within the party. Indeed, Hillary Clinton's appeal inside the Democratic Party is not a sure thing. She has earned 2,205 delegates and 55 percent of the vote in the primaries compared to 1,846 delegates and 43 percent for Sanders. Even in a rather uncrowded Democratic field, she struggled to take the lead facing a progressive movement that has become stronger in the past eight years. On Day 2 of the convention in Philadelphia, it was important for Sanders to watch the votes of his delegates casted and he was the last person in the roll call to ask the chair to nominate Clinton to lead the Democratic Party.

Yet, beneath this show of unity, distrust and skepticism linger. The doubts that the Democratic establishment was providing implicit support for the Clinton campaign during the primaries were confirmed with [WikiLeaks](#) revealing nearly 20,000 internal emails by Democratic National Committee (DNC) officials conspiring to undermine the Sanders campaign. This development on the eve of the convention led to the resignation of the DNC chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz and an official apology from the DNC to the Sanders camp.

Unlike candidate Obama, who won the 2008 primaries and immediately made a compromise with the establishment, the leftist Senator in recent weeks aggressively sought to shape two crucial issues for Democrats: the platform and the internal processes of the party. Wary of the unity of the party behind

her in the national elections, Hillary Clinton compromised with Sanders on the economic portion of the Democratic Party's platform, in particular raising the minimum wage. Another milestone was a deal between Clinton and Sanders to reduce the number of super delegates by two-thirds, a step that will ultimately change the dynamic of the Democratic Party primaries and reduce the influence of the party establishment.

In his July 25 convention speech, Sanders promised that "the political revolution" will continue and affirmed that Clinton "must become the next President of the United States." His efforts throughout the convention have been instrumental for the Clinton campaign to quell an angry base. Going against the wishes of his own delegates, Sanders even thwarted an attempt to challenge the nomination of Vice Presidential nominee Tim Kaine who was picked by Hillary as her running mate.

Indeed, the selection of Kaine, a known Obama ally, was meant to serve a strategy aimed at winning the national elections rather than moving swiftly to unify the Democratic Party. Kaine can cover most of Clinton's weakness in appealing to white male voters as well as Hispanics and independents, in working across the aisle with Republicans, in having a populist tone, and in securing a victory in the swing state of Virginia. Yet, only after he was announced as VP nominee, Kaine changed his views on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal and progressive groups began warming up to him gradually.

There are elements in the left wing of the party that will likely not support neither Clinton nor her Republican opponent Donald Trump. The Republican candidate has been using both his own opposition to TPP and the Democratic Party's divisions to appeal to Sanders' voters. Trump noted on July 25 that it is "sad to watch Sanders abandon the revolution." Vice President Joe Biden came down July 26 to the convention floor to show a more balanced approach from the Obama Administration toward Sanders supporters and to prevent them from potentially switching votes to Trump. "You gotta give people a chance to kinda get over it, and they're getting over it. They're just angry," noted the Vice President. It was interesting to witness Biden as the bearer of this message since he once contemplated challenging Hillary from the left flank of the Democratic Party.

Based on CNN [polling](#) released July 25, Trump is now leading Clinton 44 to 39 percent with a significant post Republican convention bounce, the first of its kind since 2000. The main reason behind this shift was Trump's increased support among independents, up from 34 to 46 percent. It is yet to be

seen if Hillary will have a similar post-convention bounce and if the selection of Kaine had any immediate impact on independent voters.

The main two arguments used to polish Hillary's image during the first two days of the convention have been labelling her as a champion for the underprivileged and warning of the dangers of her Republican opponent. Yet, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News poll, Trump has an edge on the question of who voters think is the better candidate to handle the economy and terrorism. It will be crucial for Hillary in her acceptance speech to convey a sense of balance between her credentials on national security and her strong commitment to the liberal tradition of peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Unlike her husband's moderate stances, Clinton's record shows she held liberal views throughout her tenure at the US Senate representing the state of New York. However, three positions characterized her political career, leaving progressives skeptical about her political beliefs: voting for the Iraq war in the US Congress in 2003, supporting free trade agreements until recently, and shifting her views on gay marriage late in 2013. It is also worth noting that Sanders did not include any foreign policy issues in his convention speech, exclusively focusing on a domestic-heavy agenda, which likely reflects the lack of any deal or agreement with the Clinton camp on key national security matters. Trump immediately charged that the weakness of the Democrats on national security was reflected in the fact that the DNC convention did not name or address on day one the threat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

While Democratic presidential candidates typically shift from left to center once national elections begin, Clinton is taking the opposite trajectory in light of the growing influence of the progressive base. Her acceptance speech on July 28 will be a defining moment, as she will have to balance between appealing to progressives and reaching out to moderate Republicans and independent voters. Hillary was often described in her decades-long political career as "the most famous woman nobody knows." The convention speech is her best chance to reintroduce herself to the American people and to the world closely watching the US presidential elections.