

Join a public Meeting on

American Presidential Election: Distance from Donald Trump to Bernie Sanders

Speakers

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@9.30 PM | Sabarmathi Mess**

USA has been incorrectly referred to as the oldest democracy in the world. The truth is that Universal Adult Franchise did not exist in the country until late 1960s, when massive civil rights movement forced the federal government to enact laws enforcing voting rights for every citizen. The state of democracy in USA can be termed as a plutocracy, which is a form of oligarchy controlled by a small minority of the wealthiest citizens. As of 2014, out of the 538 members of US Congress, 268 are millionaires.

Since the late 1850s, the political competition in the country has mainly revolved around the Democrats and the Republicans. Both the parties have had quite converging views on the role of USA as an imperialistic bully in world affairs. It was under the Democratic president Lyndon B. Johnson that America intensified its occupation of Vietnam while it was under the Republican George W. Bush that they initiated the so called on "War on Terror" which is responsible for the present socio economic chaos in the Middle East.

The divergence, although very limited, has been in the domestic affairs. The Democratic Party has taken healthier positions with respect to various social questions. It was under the Democratic presidents that the social security was provided, civil rights was enacted and Gay marriage was made legal. This is in contrast to the Republican Party which has always had ultra conservative views on various social questions. But it should not be noted that in all the instances where Democratic Party has initiated progressive legislations, it has been due to decades of pressure from various social movements. The party has never initiated any progressive policy prescription on their own.

2016 presidential elections:

The 2016 presidential elections have brought about changes that may in the long run could have cataclysmic effects on the American party system. The anger of working American people who have been at the receiving end of economic depression is getting manifested in completely contradictory ways in this election.

On the republican side, the leader is Donald Trump. This multi billionaire epitomises the time tested right wing strategy to inflate mundane issues to deviate discussions about real concrete issues. The defining policy prescription of this sexist megalomaniac for all the economic problems faced by USA is to build a wall in US-Mexico border to prevent immigration from Mexico. This is despite the fact that the net immigration to USA from Mexico has been negative. A known Islamophobic, he stooped to a new low when he pointed that Muslims should not be allowed to enter USA in the eve of Paris attacks. Ironically, these comments have increased his poll ratings. The other candidates in the Republican side are no less right wing or

regressive. Ted Cruz who has been polling second in the polls is an Evangelical fundamentalist. Another candidate Ben Carson who is also a Christian fundamentalist holds awfully strong anti abortion views. According to him even a pregnancy arising out of rape should be not be terminated.

in the Democratic side, the leader at the moment is Hilary Clinton, a politician who represents the economic and political establishment. She is known for her close ties with various American banks who were responsible for the financial crisis of 2007. Closely on Hilary's heel's is Bernie Sanders, a self described "Democratic Socialist". Sanders has been a vocal critic of the corporate control of American democracy. Some of the policy highlights of Sanders include higher taxation of the billionaire class, free education, free health care and curbing the influence of money on politics. Fundamentally, although he considers himself as a Socialist, he is a Social Democrat.

Naturally, the candidacy of Sanders has gained attention from the American Left. Occupy Wall Street movement has already endorsed Sanders. The candidacy of Sanders has resulted in two kinds of reactions from the Left in USA. One is completely dismissing him since he's is contesting for the candidacy of Democratic Party which has always acted as the instrument of the ruling class. But at the same time, these critics forget the political context of America which has had a history of strong anti-Communism, marginalisation of left wing politics and scuttling of trade union rights. If Sanders's candidacy offers an entry point for the Left to be a part of the debate after being irrelevant for decades, it has to be explored by them. According to a recent poll, 54 % Americans believe that "A Political Revolution Should Happen in America to Redistribute Wealth from the Billionaire Class". This result has a lot to do with Sander's call for a political revolution to attack the hegemony of billionaire class. Another reaction from the Left has been to uncritically support Sanders endorsing all his positions. This is also problematic since Sander's positions on many foreign policy matters, especially with respect to the question of Palestine is no different from the mainstream American Politicians. The need of the hour is to have a balanced view on Bernie Sanders.

Possibility of changes in American politics

The American elections in 2016 could be a precursor to the changes that could happen in American polity in the long run. The dissatisfaction of the American working class and middle class with the economic system is getting manifested in these two candidates, although both of them are polar opposites. If the American polity continue to get polarised along these lines, the political system as we know in USA may disappear. Contradictions could come out in the open and could result in massive changes. In order to discuss in depth about the matter, I invite all of you to attend this public meeting.