

Can Clinton Unify Left And Center Against Trump?

WASHINGTON – Hillary Clinton's performance at the Democratic National convention in Philadelphia was "mission impossible". Now the anointed presidential candidate of a Democratic Party that has once more moved decidedly to the left, Clinton needs to patch together the centrist base and the noisy far left Sanders' crowds.

A progressive and a centrist

Clinton's objective was to reintroduce herself to America as a progressive, (wink to Sanders' people), but also as a reliable, pragmatic unifier (wink to the center, and hopefully some Republicans), who can get things done.

Still, too many conflicting messages were packed in her speech: continuity with the Obama policies which she called very successful; and at the same time a strong indictment of injustice, enduring racism, and widening inequality in America, all of which apparently did not diminish during the 8 long Obama years.

So, her speech gave good marks to Obama's progressive agenda, and at the same time bad marks to Obama's America for being so far behind in implementing a true progressive agenda, this way causing misery and suffering among the under privileged. A clear contradiction here. Is she proposing continuity or disruption?

Appeal to the middle

At the same time, Clinton wanted to appeal to middle of the road Republicans truly worried about the possibility of a Trump victory. However, she also had to shore up her now left leaning Democratic Party base by endorsing the essence, if not

the details, of the Bernie Sanders far left economic agenda.

Something for everybody

So here are the ingredients of this political and policy stew: Clinton is the candidate who stands for continuity and disruption. She is with both the far left and the center, and may be some conservatives. And, mind you, this convoluted message is coming from an aged, quintessentially establishment, professional politician with extremely high negatives. Many voters will simply not buy this catch all “agenda”.

Stronger Together?

Supposedly, the magic glue that would unite all these diverse and in fact mutually exclusive themes is the “Stronger Together” slogan adopted by the Clinton campaign. In her acceptance speech Clinton tried to paint a picture of how her administration would operate. She would get everybody to work together—congressional Democrats and Republicans, disgruntled Republicans longing for centrist policies, and Bernie Sanders’ “revolutionaries” who want radical economic and societal transformation.

Nice idea, may be inspiring for some; but hardly the articulation of a clear and compelling policy program.

A leftist agenda

In fact, her speech was rich in anecdotes and vignettes but thin on policy details. To the extent that there were any, they show a Democratic Party that has moved to the left, in fact the far left. Indeed, Hillary Clinton now looks very much like a female George McGovern leading a leftists party that may have lost its connection with America’s more centrist middle.

In her speech, there was absolutely nothing about reducing the

national debt, the need to have common sense entitlement reform, or enacting pro-business tax reform. So, nothing on fiscal responsibility and measures leading to the promotion of higher economic growth.

On the contrary, plenty on more money for an expanded Social Security system, free college for everybody, and higher taxes for the rich to pay for all this. Lace that with full legalization of illegal immigrants and syrupy stuff about "Love Trumps Hate" and you get a Europe-style Socialist-lite agenda big on income redistribution, economic equality, fiscally irresponsible and instinctively pacifist.

This is quite frankly the Sanders agenda.

Just tactics?

Was Clinton just paying lip service to the themes loved by the party left in her speech simply because she had no choice? The truth may be that she had to endorse the Sanders agenda, because she did not want to be heckled by his supporters who filled the convention venue, and because she fully realizes that she is now the presidential candidate of a Democratic Party where socialist leaning ideas have become core beliefs.

Tough road ahead

While Clinton will get the usual "post-convention bump" in the upcoming polls, for the moment Trump, notwithstanding his boisterous style and open disunity within his own party, is doing quite well in the polls.

Unpredictable Trump

No matter what he said about dumping NATO allies who do not spend enough on defense and inviting Russia to disclose hacked Clinton e-mails, Trump is surprisingly competitive in all the critical swing states. Is this a reflection of his strength, or a clear sign that Clinton is even more unpopular than we

thought? Probably the latter.