

Is There A Democratic Party Policy Agenda?

WASHINGTON – If you watch most of the cable news channels these days you get a steady diet of endless, in fact almost obsessive, commentary on what President Donald Trump said or tweeted today, and what the seasoned analysts around the table think about it.

Endless coverage

As President Trump relishes being unconventional and breaking all the established “Washington rules”, plenty for the experts to talk about. Fine. Except that this all they talk about. Which is to say that if you watch CNN or MSNBC what passes as “the news” is the endless effort to score the latest Trump outrageous tweet. And as different talk shows follow each other, the new anchor picks up exactly where his/her colleague left it and repeats the tweet of the day and asks a different panel of savvy experts what we should make of it. The variations in all this are limited to the degree of (feigned I believe) amazement and/or outrage.

Again, this is not happening on occasion. This is now the standard offering throughout the 24/7 news cycle. Look, I do understand that the media has a duty to report on what the President of the United States says or tweets. And certainly, since Mr. Trump enjoys being unconventional and controversial, his statements give fodder for talk shows.

Is there a Democratic Party agenda?

Still, my point here is that there is practically nothing else in the news. The one thing that is missing, probably because it does not really exist, is a thoughtful alternative policy agenda coming from the Democratic Party. Cable news shows do not report on it because most likely there is nothing to

report.

And this is truly astonishing. We have an entire news media apparatus supported by scores of pundits who keep telling us that we have a strange President sitting in the White House who says and occasionally does unpredictable things, while the Republican majority in Congress is in (terminal?) disarray. And yet no alternative vision to this (apparently) unsatisfactory state of affairs is presented by the Democrats and discussed by the media.

Sit back and watch the Republican Party implosion

Are we to conclude that the Democratic Party strategy is just to sit back and watch the hoped for Trump implosion and the eventual dissolution of a Republican Party torn apart by incurable internal ideological battles? This may be a clever tactical approach. But this is not a strategy for a national political force aspiring to govern the United States of America. Let us not forget that the Democratic Party in 2016 lost its momentum and ability to connect with millions of voters. It lost the White House to a complete outsider and it failed to regain control of the Senate even though the odds favored it.

No compelling message in 2016

In 2016 the Democrats best hope was Hillary Clinton, a shop worn uninspiring candidate who represented a retread of the tired Clinton Brand. And she had to fight until the end against Bernie Sanders, a feisty old socialist whose astonishingly outdated policy agenda was all about redistributing (ill gotten) wealth accumulated by the demonized 1% in a more equitable way. That's all the Democrats had to offer: Clinton and Sanders.

What's the alternative?

Today, precisely because the Republican Party policy program

seems confused and confusing, the American voters need to hear about a credible and thoughtful Democratic Party alternative agenda. It is OK for the late night comedy shows to use the latest Trump outrage as material for their jokes. This is fine. Political satire is healthy in a vibrant democracy.

Show America how the Democrats will govern

But the news media should stop this obsessive saturation coverage, while the Democratic opposition, instead of relishing the Republicans' self-inflicted wounds, should rise to the occasion and offer a new and inspiring vision on how they intend to govern America. As of now, I have seen none of that. And the reason for this, I suspect, is that the Democrats do not have anything new to say. And this is sad. A healthy republic needs a healthy debate on policy alternatives. Right now we have mostly noise.