
THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2008: PRIMARY SEASON

Judy Waters Pasqualge

At the end of 2007, with the US primary season set to begin in January, a familiar feeling of 'here we go again' kept tugging at my brain. Coming soon would be a deluge of campaign pr, special interest (including media) spin, the political game soap opera beating out issues, the money hunt, lies and smears ... and maybe worse. It would be one thing if the whole process led to some real change, but I felt a certain lack of interest in most of the dozen or so main candidates of the Democratic and Republican parties. Generally, these people could only be described as representing the status quo, in the sense of US foreign and domestic economic policy. A few pushed the right-wing Christian fundamentalist extreme, and a few were noteworthy for consistent anti-war positions – for immediate withdrawal, with several weaker candidates even supporting war reparations to Iraq and an end to the 'permanent war' economy.

At least, however, there has been a contest within the two parties for choice of presidential candidate, and no contestant is a sitting president or vice-president – the last time this happened was in 1928. As such, the fractures within the parties and within the US citizenry can be more easily seen. In addition, the concurrent races for US Senate and House, state governorships and legislatures, and other local officials may quite possibly continue the trend from 2004 and 2006, in which not only did Democrats gain hugely, but the issues underlying these gains reflected positions tending toward the Left (or centre, depending on your definition). On top of all this, as the end of the Bush term grows nearer, and his polls remain strongly negative on the two key issues of the war and economy, there is a chance of some administration step regarding Iraq or Iran, and/or of a major debacle; this in the context of a quickly deepening recession. So far, voter turnout has by far surpassed that in 2004, and sometimes set records. The issues are clear, and the leadership of the two main parties will have a harder time managing the desired results.¹

This article is intended as the first of several on the November 2008 presidential and general elections. The focus of this one is the events leading up to the situation in early March.

majority of state primaries or caucuses (public meetings) have already been held – to determine, generally, the

affiliation of many state delegates to each party's candidate nominating convention in late summer. Many candidates have already dropped out, and John McCain has emerged as the Republican candidate. Later articles will provide an update of the primary season, which ends in June: the August and September party conventions; the presidential candidates and their advisors; the televised debates in September and October; state and local races; and the November poll. First, however, a note on the system of selecting the party presidential candidates is necessary.

Primaries and Caucuses – 50 Different Procedures

Each state determines how delegates to the nominating conventions are selected. In some states a person must be a registered party member to vote in that party's primary; in a few states anyone can participate. Many states hold direct elections, others hold caucuses. Some states allocate most of the delegates to candidates based on winner-take-all; others divide delegates proportionally based on the percentage of vote obtained; others might give weight to special groups, for example rural voters. The Democratic Party (DP) divides elected delegates proportionally. Both the DP and Republican Party (RP) select additional delegates: the RP includes the three members from each state who are elected to the Republican National Committee (RNC), ten at-large delegates, and bonus delegates if the party holds the state governorship, or US Senate seat, or controls a state House or Senate. The DP assigns 796 additional delegates, who include party officials, and state and national office holders; they are not bound to a particular candidate. Each state also defines the exact 'commitment' of elected delegates to candidates – what happens when candidates drop out, or if multiple votes are needed at the nominating convention.

Each state determines its primary or caucus date(s), with many choosing to schedule Democratic and Republican contests on the same day for cost and logistics reasons. However, these dates are determined in conjunction with rules established by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and RNC. This year the two parties agreed to hold almost half of primaries on 5 February, and restricted which states

could hold earlier ones. Michigan and Florida broke the rules by scheduling earlier votes; DP rules deny their delegates any role in the nominating convention, and the RP denies one-half from any role. (These are key states, however, and the two parties will likely find a way to seat delegates).²

Candidates and Issues

Heading into the first contest, the Iowa caucus on 3 January, the relative positions of the DP and RP showed the Democrats controlling the House of Representatives (232-202) and Senate (51-49), and more governorships and state legislatures. Polls seemed to show: an increase in the number of voters identifying themselves as Democrats, and in independents favouring Democrats; the Democrats raising more money, and their constituency showing more enthusiasm; and an increase in people who think the country is 'on the wrong track.'³

War and Economy – Republicans

Almost all eight Republican candidates supported the decisions to go to war and increase troops levels (the 'surge' of 2007). The one exception is libertarian Ron Paul, a Texas Congressman, who opposed the war from the start, was against the surge, and calls for immediate troop withdrawal. Three candidates favour maintaining troop levels: John McCain (former navy pilot and POW, Arizona senator); Mitt Romney (businessman, former Massachusetts governor); and Rudy Giuliani (former US attorney, former mayor of New York). Several candidates have called for a phased withdrawal of troops: Fred Thompson (former lobbyist and Tennessee rep and senator, actor); and Tom Tancredo (Colorado rep). Two favour gradually handing over responsibility to Iraqis: Mike Huckabee (Southern Baptist minister, former Arkansas governor); and Duncan Hunter (California rep).

Similarly, most of the eight support Bush on the economy: for lowering taxes on the wealthy, free trade agreements, privatization and a roll-back of social services. Romney also calls for an industrial policy to keep such jobs in the US; Huckabee calls for a national (regressive) flat tax; and Paul would cut both war costs and social programmes. With the swift downturn of the economy from late 2007, however, and even the president supporting government payments to individuals and small businesses, Republicans have had to change gear (see below).

War and Economy – Democrats

With the war highly unpopular among US voters, dealing with the issue presents a problem for many DP candidates. The war was an issue in 2006, but many Congressional Democrats took no real action to end it. An anti-war resolution was passed, and a weak attempt made to set a troop withdrawal timetable, but these were not linked to denying funds. Rather, the war was often used as a bargaining chip for administration concessions on domestic programmes.⁴ A key factor to keep in mind is exactly what is meant by 'withdrawing troops.' Combat troops comprise only 20-25% of total forces in Iraq. If trainers and advisors are retained, about three times the number of support forces are necessary. And these figures say nothing about the almost 50,000 private security personnel. Finally, there is the question of the very large, and seemingly permanent, US bases now being constructed.⁵

Dennis Kucinich (Ohio rep, former mayor of Cleveland) was the only candidate to vote against the war in 2002; he also voted against the surge and favours immediate troop withdrawal. Mike Gravel (Alaska senator 1969-81) also opposed the war, the surge and is for immediate withdrawal. Bill Richardson (former rep, New Mexico governor) opposed the surge and is for immediate withdrawal. Two senior DP senators, Joseph Biden (Delaware) and Christopher Dodd (Connecticut), voted for the war but are now against; they also favour troop 'redeployment' while Iraqis are trained. That leaves the three main DP candidates.

Hillary Clinton (New York senator since 2000) voted for the war in 2002, opposed the surge and voted for funding; she will not commit to a withdrawal timetable. She would leave some 60,000 trainers and special forces in Iraq and require the country to pass legislation requiring a foreign role in the oil industry. Barack Obama (Illinois senator since 2004) opposed the war from the start, and the surge, and voted for funding. He is for a phased withdrawal (16 months) to leave trainers and special forces, and the oil law. John Edwards (North Carolina senator, 2004 vice-presidential candidate) also voted for the war (now against it), for the surge, and is for a phased withdrawal leaving trainers and special forces, and the oil law.⁶

Unlike in 2004, when John Kerry could get away with ignoring the war issue, pressure from below is forcing DP candidates to explain positions. They will have to distinguish themselves from the Republicans, and from each other. The Republicans' problem is that even in many Republican

Congressional districts, a majority of voters at least want the withdrawal of combat troops to start.⁷

On the economy, it is again Rep. Kucinich who sets the left agenda, being against the permanent war economy, and for the repeal of NAFTA and US withdrawal from the WTO. Mike Gravel would cut the defense budget in half. The three main Democrats again show little difference. They generally favour a balanced budget and would repeal the Bush tax cuts to the wealthy (and use the money for education, job, energy and healthcare measures). Both Clinton and Obama are against a decrease in the defense budget, and Clinton is a long-time supporter of NAFTA (passed under Bill Clinton). Edwards, while not noted for initiating 'change' legislation, speaks of a campaign against poverty and is for some government provision of jobs.⁸ The question remains: how can the budget be balanced while maintaining defence expenditures, and, thus, where will the funds come from for promised domestic programmes?

Other Issues – Democrats and Republicans

Healthcare: With 50 million people without health insurance, steep inflation in the price of insurance, and an electorate favouring a comprehensive programme, most candidates fall short. Most Republicans are for allowing the free market, not government, to determine coverage. Clinton and Edwards would require all people to get insurance, supported by tax credits to small business and individuals, and by money from reversing the Bush tax cuts; Obama would require employers to contribute to plans for workers, and parents to cover children. It is unclear how the very poor/jobless – those who earn too little to pay taxes – would afford mandatory insurance. Kucinich and Gravel support a single-payer programme covering everyone, with the former favouring a not-for-profit system.

Abortion: The Republican candidates are against a woman's right to choose (for overturning *Roe v. Wade*) and for a ban on late-term abortion, even when the life of a mother is in danger. The Democrats support choice, and most are against the late-term ban.

Immigration: With 12 million illegals in the US, and most states passing legislation to deal with this, the issue has gained new importance. Most Republicans favour building a fence on the border with Mexico. McCain and Romney support a temporary work programme. Tancredo would use troops to deport illegals. Clinton, Obama, Biden and Dodd favour the

fence, with Gravel, Kucinich and Richardson opposed. Clinton, Obama and Edwards are for some process to legalize some illegals.

Iran: Among Republicans only Ron Paul is against possible military action against Iran, and he voted against naming the Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization (Kyl-Lieberman, September 2007). Clinton and Dodd voted for Kyl-Lieberman; Obama did not vote on it; Richardson, Kucinich and Gravel were against.

Patriot Act: Clinton and Edwards voted for the act in 2001; Clinton and Obama voted for reauthorization of it in 2006.⁹

Thus, among the main contenders, there are few differences within the two parties. However, with regard to the DP, there are many issues now on the agenda that Kerry avoided in 2004. In addition to the war and healthcare, these include: global warming, reform of free trade agreements, tax policy, education, infrastructure, the criminal justice system and 'war on drugs,' and media consolidation.¹⁰

Candidates – Other Information

McCain: a US Naval Academy graduate and pilot for 22 years; POW in Vietnam for five years; naval liaison to Senate; Arizona rep from 1982; senator from 1986.

Romney: a Mormon critical of secularists; CEO of a venture capital fund; son of former Michigan governor George Romney; supporter of 'rough' interrogation; RP establishment favourite; known for easy switch on issues and hazy ideas.

Huckabee: anti-evolutionist who thinks homosexuality is a sin; against divorce; apocalyptic world view; against Muslims and Mormons; supporter of Israel and expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza; as governor, supported state minimum wage and health care legislation.

Giuliani: pro-Israel; law and order hardliner; social liberal on abortion, gun control and immigration.

Paul: for abolishing the Internal Revenue Service, all federal taxation and safety regulations, the Education Department; criticized for racist/anti-Semitic/homophobic statements.

Thompson: lobbyist for 20 years, including for savings and loan sector; Senate Watergate Committee counsel; key proponent of 'weapons of mass destruction' argument; key player in Scooter Libby defence fund (convicted former chief-of-staff to Cheney).

Hunter: Vietnam vet and lawyer, elected to Congress in 1980.

Tancredo: Reagan regional rep of Department of Education; noted for xenophobic anti-illegal immigrant views; thinks Bush too soft in 'war on terror.'¹¹

Clinton: corporate lawyer and former Wal-Mart board member; credibility problems regarding 1978 cattle futures insider trading, role in firing White House travel office employees (under Bill Clinton), role in Arkansas real estate/savings and loan scandals (Whitewater).

Obama: civil rights lawyer, first black president of *Harvard Law Review*, gave noteworthy speech at 2004 Democratic National Convention.

Edwards: personal injury lawyer; self-made millionaire.

Richardson: Energy secretary and ambassador to UN under Bill Clinton; part Hispanic; has most international experience.

Kucinich: as Cleveland mayor refused to privatize electricity, leading to banks refusing to lend and city default (bank criminal involvement with private utilities later proved); lost next mayoral race but elected to city council, then as Ohio state senator, and to US House in 1997; leader of campaign to impeach VP Cheney; first to take stand against Bush on Iran.

Gravel: anti-Vietnam War and draft; read Daniel Ellsberg's *Pentagon Papers* into Congressional Record to side step its censor; openly states that troops in Vietnam and Iraq died in vain, and that it is a delusion for the US or its citizens to claim superiority.

Dodd: chair of Senate Banking Committee.

Biden: supporter of 'soft' partition of Iraq.¹²

March 2008

Looking back to early January, and besides the swing to Obama and McCain (see below), the noteworthy trend is the challenge to established powers in both the DP and RP. The RP is having a hard time keeping its grand coalition together, because there is no one candidate who appeals to all. The RP establishment and big business clearly favoured Romney. Party conservatives and their supporters in the media and think tanks detest McCain for his stands against the Bush tax cuts, torture and extraordinary rendition, and in favour of campaign finance reform, global warming measures, allowing cheap drug imports, and a citizenship route for some illegals. These stands have made McCain attractive to moderates and independents; if he now changes position, he will look like Bush. Much of the Christian right supported Huckabee, who also has some populist appeal. Giuliani, while a foreign policy hawk, leans to being a social liberal.¹³ The split in the party – over issues – has resulted in a decrease in campaign contributions, lower voter turnout, and many local Republicans deciding not to run for office this year.

The conservative DP leadership, supportive of Hillary Clinton, is facing a strong internal challenge over choice of candidate and campaign strategy (led by white and black men). After the defeat of John Kerry in 2004, many state DP officials assured that former Vermont governor Howard Dean became head of the DNC, against the wishes of the Clinton clique. Dean instituted a 50-state strategy – to contest all races, and assist states in hiring local organizers to work year round – countering the party norm of targeting big donors, with big media, and key targets (Florida in 2000 and Ohio in 2004), while ignoring huge areas such as the South. The success of Dean's strategy was seen in the 2006 mid-term elections. With Democrats contesting even sure Republican seats, the RP was unable to shift resources to Democratic areas. In addition, the strategy increased grassroots involvement, including by the Left, the amount of small campaign contributions, and this year voter turnout. Still, DP conservatives tried to unseat Dean after the 2006 elections, and will continue in this attempt. Their dilemma is – with Clinton, Obama and Edwards holding similar views; Clinton carrying strong negatives; and Obama seen as more electable in states that vote DP in local races but Republican in the presidential – that a window opened for another candidate. Going into the primary season. Clinton stressed experience, Obama the need for change, and Edwards the need to fight poverty.¹⁴

The Primaries

The state primaries conducted from early January to early March made for interesting viewing. It seemed possible that the Republican contest would only be resolved at the September convention, but McCain has gained a strong win. On the Democratic side, many saw Hillary Clinton as an easy winner (indeed, her campaign was modeled on a win by the end of Super Tuesday on 5 February), never imagining Obama as presenting such a challenge. Here's a rundown:

Iowa (3 January): a largely white state that went Democratic in 2006, with 4% of people polling for military action against Iran, and with December polls close and varying widely. McCain and Giuliani largely skipped the state to concentrate elsewhere; Romney, using his own money, spent big: Huckabee (34%), Romney (26%), Thompson and McCain (13%), Paul (10%), Giuliani (4%). Huckabee won the evangelical/born-again vote, and younger, lower-income and less-educated voters. Thompson's strong showing kept him in the race. Democrats: Obama (38%), Edwards (30%), Clinton (29%). Obama gained over half the youth (under

age 24) vote, 35% of women and the higher educated; Clinton won 30% of women and people over age 65.¹⁵ (Group voting percentages are determined by polls taken after people vote, and are very inexact.)

After Iowa, Biden and Dodd withdrew from the race. For Clinton and Romney, New Hampshire became more important. Strategy differences emerged in the Clinton campaign, partly over how to deal with Obama; in December a campaign official had speculated on whether he had ever dealt drugs, and Bill Clinton said Obama as president would be like "rolling the dice"; the campaign used Bill for delivering the 'low blows,' especially on the day before a primary.¹⁶

Wyoming (5 January): only Republican; McCain, Huckabee, Giuliani campaigned elsewhere: Romney (57%), Thompson (21%).

New Hampshire (8 January): record turnout for Democrats, down for Republicans. Republicans: McCain (37%), Romney (32%), Huckabee (11%), Giuliani (9%), Paul (8%). McCain won moderates and liberals, all age and income categories; Romney won conservatives; half of party voters said they'd had enough of Bush. Democrats: Clinton (39%), Obama (36%), Edwards (17%), Richardson (5%). More than half of Democrats said they wanted a candidate for change, 20% with experience. Clinton won with women, middle aged and over 65, lower income, and those wanting experience. Obama won with men, independents, youth, middle class and wealthy, those wanting change, and those stating the main issue as the war or healthcare.¹⁷

After New Hampshire, races in both parties were wide open. Richardson withdrew. Obama gained key endorsements: the Culinary Workers' Union (largest in Nevada, in Las Vegas hotel, restaurant, laundry sectors); the Nevada chapter of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU); Senator John Kerry; a key California rep close to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi; senators from Missouri, Nebraska and South Dakota (the latter close to former Majority Leader Tom Daschle); the governor of Arizona (the latter two categories in either Republican or swing states). By the end of 2007, ten senators had endorsed Clinton, none doing so thus far in 2008. In preparation for the next week's contest in Michigan, both Clinton and Obama announced economic stimulus plans of over \$100 billion, offering tax rebates to individuals and tax breaks to small business, and mortgage assistance. Clinton acknowledged the role of former President Johnson in

promoting civil rights, a statement construed as belittling Martin Luther King, setting off an uproar.¹⁸

Michigan (15 January): both parties penalized for breaking rules. Republicans: Romney (39%), McCain (30%), Huckabee (16%), Paul (6%). Romney won conservatives, Bush supporters, those valuing experience and worried about the economy; McCain won moderates and independents. Romney's win kept him in the race. Democrats: Clinton (55%), uncommitted (40% – Obama and Edwards pulled out after DP stripped delegates). Clinton lost the black vote to Obama, 70-30%. After Michigan, Senator Leahy (Vermont, chair of Judiciary Committee) endorsed Obama.¹⁹

Nevada (19 January): state with highest home foreclosure rate; 25% of Republican voters are Mormons; 66% of Democrats are unionized. Republicans: Romney (51%), Paul (14%), McCain (13%), Thompson (7%), Huckabee (8%). Romney only active campaigner. Democrats: Clinton (51%), Obama (45%), Edwards (4%) (but Obama won more delegates). Clinton pulled lower income, Las Vegas County, Hispanic and women. Obama won across the state, including (largely white) rural, Reno and Carson City; blacks, youth.

Nevada had set up caucus sites in Las Vegas hotels to enable worker participation. This was challenged in court by the state Education Association, a backer of Clinton, after Obama won the union endorsements; a judge ruled against the challenge. After the poll, Bill Clinton accused the unions of suppressing votes, and then the Clinton campaign misleadingly construed Obama's statement that the RP was the "party of ideas" during the Reagan years as being one of praise.²⁰

South Carolina (19 January): Republican only; McCain (33%), Huckabee (30%), Thompson (16%), Romney (15%), Paul (4%). McCain again gained moderates, independents and those opposed to Bush. After the 19 January polls, Hunter withdrew from the race and endorsed Huckabee. Thompson then withdrew, and retired General Norman Schwarzkopf endorsed McCain. Kutinich withdrew.

South Carolina (26 January): Democrats only; with blacks making up more than 50% of voters, October 2007 polls showed the state going to Clinton; Edwards won there in 2004; voter turnout 80% more than in 2004; Obama (55%), Clinton (27%), Edwards (18%). Clinton gained the white women and elderly vote; Edwards white men; and Obama most of the rest – 80% of blacks, men, women, every income

and educational level, youth, independents, moderates, key concern Iraq, economy or health care.²¹

The big news after South Carolina was the endorsements for Obama from the Kennedy family. On 27 January in *The New York Times*, Caroline Kennedy (daughter of JFK) called for a change in leadership, noting Obama's character and judgment, his appeal to youth, the dignity and honour of his campaign, and early opposition to the war. The next day, and in spite of an appeal from Bill Clinton, Senator Ted Kennedy followed. The most powerful senator on domestic issues, he had been expected to remain neutral; his stand would help Obama among Hispanics, union members and low income groups, and regarding the experience issue. Three other Kennedys then endorsed Clinton: Kathleen Kennedy Townsend (former lieutenant governor of Maryland), Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (environmental advocate), and Kerry Kennedy (human rights activist). In early February Ethel Kennedy (widow of Robert) and Maria Shriver endorsed Obama. Clinton also picked up endorsements from *The New York Times* and *LA Times*.²²

Florida (29 January): penalized by both parties for early date; the first very demographically mixed state, of the old and new South, many New Yorkers, retired and active military, and Hispanics in both parties. Republicans: a must win for Giuliani; the governor endorsed McCain; McCain (36%), Romney (31%), Giuliani (15%), Huckabee (14%). McCain won with the same coalition; won Dade County (Miami), the Gulf Coast and Tampa; Romney won very conservatives, the northeast, and those approving of Bush. The Democrats did not campaign in the state; Clinton (50%), Obama (33%), Edwards (14%).²³ After Florida, Giuliani withdrew and endorsed McCain; California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger also endorsed him. Edwards withdrew.

Maine (5 February): Republican only; Romney (52%), McCain (21%), Paul (18%), Huckabee (6%). This period saw conservative attacks on McCain by Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter and Pat Buchanan.²⁴

Super Tuesday (5 February): Democratic contests in 22 states, Republican in 21; including large-delegate states of California, Illinois, New York, New Jersey; swing states of Alaska, Colorado, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, Tennessee, New Mexico; states with large black populations – Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama; and large Hispanic – New Mexico, Arizona; many states showed record turnouts. Republicans: McCain won 9 states, Romney 7, Huckabee 5. McCain: California, New York, Illinois, New Jersey,

Missouri, Arizona, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Delaware; Romney: Massachusetts, Minnesota, Colorado, Vermont, North Dakota, Montana, Alaska; Huckabee: Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, West Virginia. Of all Republican voters that day, 33% were evangelical/born-again, 40% said the main issue was the economy, and 25% illegal immigration.

Democrats: Obama won 13 states and Clinton 9. Obama: Illinois, Georgia, Missouri, Minnesota, Colorado, Alabama, Connecticut, Utah, Delaware, North Dakota, Alaska, Kansas, Idaho; Clinton: California, New York, New Jersey, Tennessee, Massachusetts, Arizona, Oklahoma, Arkansas, New Mexico. In general, Clinton won with white women, Hispanics, elderly, lower income, issue of health care, and experience. Obama won among blacks, higher income, most liberal, issue of the war; he also gained 40% of women and whites. With regard to delegates won, Clinton and Obama were about even; the popular vote was tied – results that showed Obama gaining in popularity over the past weeks. His campaign pulled in \$32 million in January, as compared to Clinton's \$13 million.²⁵

McCain's showing on Super Tuesday convinced Romney to drop out of the race. Obama picked up several endorsements: the Transportation Workers Union; and Rep. David Obey (D-Wisconsin), chair of the House Appropriations Committee; Obey had supported Edwards, and is an economic populist against the Bush tax cuts and free trade agreements.²⁶

Washington, Louisiana, Nebraska, Virgin Islands (9 February): Republicans: McCain won Washington (26%, Huckabee 24%, Paul 22%, Romney 17%). Huckabee won Louisiana (43%, McCain 43%, Romney 6%, Paul 5%); and Nebraska (60%, McCain 24%, Paul 11%, Romney 3%). Obama beat Clinton in all four: Washington, one of the most liberal states (68-31%); Louisiana (57-36%), Nebraska (68-32%), and Virgin Islands (90-8%).

Maine (10 February): Democrats only; Obama beat Clinton, 59-40%. With Obama on a roll, Clinton's campaign manager resigned, to be replaced by her former chief-of-staff. In question was the strategy to focus on delegate-rich states, to front end spending with the assumption of winning the nomination by early February, and whether to now stick to issues or to confront Clinton's shortcomings.²⁷

Virginia, Maryland, Washington, DC (12 February): With all three having large black populations, and relatively

educated and affluent areas (including the DC suburbs). Republicans: McCain easily won all three: Virginia (50%, Huckabee 41%, Paul 5%, Romney 4%); Maryland (55%, Huckabee 30%, Paul and Romney 6%); DC (68%, Huckabee 17%, Paul 8%, Romney 6%). Obama beat Clinton: Virginia (64-35%); Maryland (61-37%), DC (75-24%). In Virginia Obama cut into Clinton's constituencies, winning with women, whites, Hispanics, rural, suburban, high school educated, lower income, main issue war or economy or health care. Clinton won with white women.²⁸ At the end of the day the Democrats' approximate delegate count showed Obama with 1,275 and Clinton with 1,220 (2,025 needed for nomination).

In preparation for the next week's Wisconsin primary, Obama revised his economic programme. He criticized NAFTA and China's most-favoured-nation trade status, corporate tax loopholes, the Bush tax cuts, high credit card charges, and tax breaks to companies that shift jobs overseas; he came out for investment and jobs in infrastructure and green energy. He picked up two more important endorsements: Rep. John Lewis (D-Georgia), the elder statesman of the civil rights movement, who had endorsed Clinton in 2007; the national SEIU, with 1.9 million members; and the United Food and Commercial Workers, with 1.3 million. Both unions are not members of the AFL-CIO; Clinton has the endorsement of its head John Sweeney (though not the union); and AFL-CIO affiliates the American Federation of Teachers and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. McCain received the endorsement of Romney and George Bush senior.²⁹

Wisconsin, Hawaii (19 February): in Wisconsin, a state with few minorities and many liberals and independents, McCain won (55%, Huckabee 37%, Paul 5%); the Republicans did not contest in Hawaii. Obama won both: Wisconsin (58-40%), Hawaii (76-25%), making eleven victories in a row. Clinton's slide among white women, union and lower income voters continued.³⁰

In the run-up to the 4 March primaries, Obama obtained the following endorsements: Feminists for Peace (1,000, including Barbara Ehrenreich, Katha Pollitt and Susan Sarandon, who criticized Clinton's position on Iraq; they join former NARAL president Kate Michelman, and the director of the National Association of Working Women); Russ Feingold (Wisconsin anti-war and anti-Patriot Act senator); the Teamsters (1.4 million); Paul Volker (former chair of the Federal Reserve); Jim Hightower (long-time Texas populist

state official); and Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-West Virginia), chair of the Intelligence Committee. Ralph Nader announced that he would run under the Green Party, and New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg that he would not run as an independent.³¹

The Clinton campaign came out fighting. It complained that the media was reveling in her downfall. Obama was attacked for plagiarizing a statement said by the Massachusetts governor; his picture in Somali dress was leaked to the press; a statement by his economic advisor to a Canadian official that campaign talk on NAFTA was "posturing" was broadcast; his readiness regarding national security was questioned; and the media was urged to question Obama about his ties to Tony Rezko, a Chicago developer whose corruption trial was to begin on 3 March. By end of the week, there was a Clinton 'comeback' tone in parts of the media, aided by her campaign raising \$35 million in February (Obama more than \$50 million).³²

Ohio, Texas, Vermont, Rhode Island (4 March): Republican: McCain beat Huckabee in all four, and enough delegates to assure the nomination: Ohio (54-33%); Texas (52-38%); Vermont (72-14%); Rhode Island (65-22%). Huckabee withdrew and endorsed McCain; President Bush also endorsed him. Clinton won all but Vermont, to keep her in the race. The outcomes in Vermont and Rhode Island were expected: Vermont, very white and anti-war, went to Obama (60-38%); Rhode Island to Clinton (58-40%). Clinton won Ohio (56-42%), supported by her usual constituencies. She also won the primary in Texas (51-47%), but the state's subsequent caucus results are not yet in. At the end of the day, approximate delegate counts showed Obama with 1,573 and Clinton with 1,464. Some good news coming out of the Ohio polls was that Dennis Kucinich won his primary, to run for and retain his House seat, against a well-funded opponent (52-33%).³³

After 4 March the Obama campaign raised the issue of Clinton's refusal thus far to release her tax returns, unlike other candidates; there was some speculation that this might be due to Bill Clinton's receipt of income from foreign sources. The Clinton campaign responded by saying Obama's campaign mimicked Ken Starr (the independent counsel who investigated the Clinton's Arkansas Whitewater involvement and Monicagate). Clinton claimed that she and McCain were ready to be commander-in-chief, but not Obama. Obama's foreign policy advisor lost her cool, called Clinton a monster, and resigned.³⁴

Wyoming (8 March): Obama won, 61-39%.

Reports as of 9 March say that the Democrats will redo the primary in Michigan, though no date has been set; the state of Florida is willing to redo its vote, if the DNC pays for it (\$10 million). The schedule here on in shows: Mississippi (11 March); Pennsylvania, the largest state left (22 April); Indiana and North Carolina (6 May); West Virginia (13 May); Kentucky and Oregon (20 May); Montana and South Dakota (3 June); and Puerto Rico (7 June).

The high-stakes game will be interesting to watch over the next three months, especially the six weeks with no primary before Pennsylvania. How successful will McCain be in unifying his party, and how will he deal with Clinton and Obama? For Clinton, this will be a chance to show what she criticizes Obama for lacking – integrity, credibility, experience and leadership; will the low attacks, which belie this, continue? It has been reported that the Republican neo-cons, like Rush Limbaugh, were hoping for a Clinton win on 4 March, that she will damage Obama in case McCain faces him – they already know Clinton's negatives. John Nichols of *The Nation* has described this as a dangerous time for the Democrats: if the Clinton campaign sees itself as winning only if Obama loses, and continues to try to destroy him, then Clinton may lose the nomination, and the Democrats lose in November; if Clinton runs on the issues, with dignity, a November loss could be avoided.³⁵

Another thing to watch is how the media portrays the Democratic race: first, Clinton was the favorite, then Obama had the momentum, then Clinton had it after the wins in Ohio and Texas – all while the delegate count has remained very close. Individual events are given more or less coverage and importance, depending on the propaganda spin intended. This propaganda is aimed at overseas viewers as well as at US voters. Part of this coverage involves opinion polling, the results of which so far have often been way off as predictors of primary wins – beware! The treatment of Obama, by both DP and RP machines, also merits watching. Obama is a serious contender, with serious backers, and Bill Clinton's moves against Obama clearly backfired.

All this is happening while the main issues – the economy and Iraq – are serious and in flux. The impact of the falling economy will likely have an increased impact on voters. The collapse of the sub-prime mortgage sector is now spreading to near-prime and prime sectors, to credit card and small business debt, and to bond insurers. The situation is clearly worsening and people are afraid. This is reflected in the

candidates having to address the issue in the last two months – and even Republicans and the president calling for government intervention. But the measures taken so far have been inadequate.

In an opinion poll taken after Super Tuesday, people were asked what would help 'a great deal' to fix the economy. The highest number of people said getting out of Iraq (48%); compared to: increasing funds for health care, education and housing (43%); cutting taxes (36%); and channeling money to the poor (29%). Among Democrats, 65% stated the response regarding the war.³⁶ In this regard, at the end of February anti-war activists commenced an Iraq Campaign, supported by MoveOn.org and SEIU, and recently Clinton and Obama were forced to take a position on the use of private security contractors.³⁷ With Clinton and McCain holding very similar positions on Iraq, and with the French and Israeli governments (along with Iranian exiles) urging US action against Iran, the next eight months could witness the playing of a few wild cards.³⁸

The good news is that the race is still on, and the issues won't disappear. Also, the Democratic campaign has moved beyond simple identification by race or gender, and people are voting. While McCain is not a neo-con, and Clinton is often as conservative as he is, a progressive agenda is still in play nationally – and is especially so at the state and local level.

End Notes

¹ At the end of January six polls on Bush's job performance showed a range of 60% to 63% disapproval; in early March seven polls showed a range of 59 to 66%. realclearpolitics.com, 29.1.08 and 7.3.08.

² realclearpolitics.com, "Looking Ahead to the Republican Convention," 14.1.08; Greg Giroux, "'Front-loading' Frustration Spurs GOP Talk of a Fix," cqpolitics.com, 20.1.08; thegreenpapers.com, "'Super Duper' Tuesday Results," 5.2.08; Jonathan Allen, "Clinton and Obama Battle Through Super Tuesday Without a Knockout," cqpolitics.com, 6.2.08. For details on each state's system, see thegreenpapers.com.

³ George Will, "Dismal Signs for the GOP," *Washington Post*, 13.1.08. Five polls at the end of January showed a range of 63% to 77% for 'wrong track.' realclearpolitics.com, 29.1.08.

⁴ Tom Hayden, "Thoughts for the Weary on Ending the War," thenation.com, 6.12.07; Robert Parry, "Why the Democrats Could Lose," *Sunday Times*, 16.12.07 (ConsortiumNews).

⁵ Tom Hayden, "Memo: Where Do the Democrats Stand on Iraq?" thenation.com, 30.1.08; "Twin Disasters," editorial, *The Nation*, 4.2.08.

6 Ari Berman, "War Comes Home to Iowa," *The Nation*, 17.12.07; "Election '08," editorial, *The Nation*, 7/14.1.08; "2008 Election: Key Issues," bbc.co.uk (9.07); "The Presidential Candidates on Iraq," politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/issues (12.07); Hayden, "Thoughts ..."

⁷ Robert Dreyfuss, "The GOP's Iraq Problem," *The Nation*, 8.10.07.

⁸ Richard Kim, "Mike Gravel," *The Nation*, 26.11.07; "2008 Election: Key Issues," bbc.co.uk (9.07); Robert Sheer, "Play the Class Card," thenation.com, 9.1.08; Robert Borosage and Katrina vanden Heuvel, "The Economy Debates," *The Nation*, 10/17.9.07; Ryan Nakashima, "Obama Unveils \$120 Billion Stimulus Plan," cqpolitics.com (AP), 13.1.08.

⁹ Berman, "War Comes ..."; "Election '08"; "2008 Election: Key Issues"; Hayden, "Thoughts ..."; Peter Schrag, "Divided States," *The Nation*, 7/14.1.08; "The Presidential Candidates on Iran" and "The Presidential Candidates on Immigration," politics.nytimes.com (12.07); Ari Berman, "Labor Rebels Against Clinton," thenation.com, 7.1.08; David Singer, "The Health Care Crisis in the United States," *Monthly Review*, 2.08.

¹⁰ "Election '08."

¹¹ For candidate info, see bbc.co.com; Hunter and Tancredo campaign websites; and Marc Cooper, "GOP Clutches at Iowa Straws," *The Nation*, 10/17.9.07; John Nichols, "Playing the God Card," *The Nation*, 31.12.07; David Corn, "Fred Thompson, Neocon," *The Nation*, 13/20.8.07; politics1.com, 11.1.08; Max Blumenthal, "The Real Mike Huckabee," thenation.com, 11.1.08.

¹² Stuart Taylor Jr., "Honesty: Hillary's Glass House," nationaljournal.com, 10.12.07; Gore Vidal, "Dennis Kucinich," *The Nation*, 26.11.07; Kim, "Mike Gravel."

¹³ Mark Levin, "The Real McCain Record – Obstacles in the Way of Conservative Support," nationalreview.com, 11.1.08; Gerald Baker, "How Mad Are the Republicans?" *The Times*, 18.1.08; John Nichols, "GOP Dilemmas," and "McCain vs. GOP Taliban," *The Nation*, 28.1.08, 25.2.08; Jim VandeHei and John F. Harris, "GOP Funk Slows Turnout, Money," dyn.politico.com, 17.1.08.

¹⁴ Bob Moser, "Purple America," and "The Way Down South," *The Nation*, 13/20.8.07, 12.2.07; Josh Kraushaar and John F. Harris, "Red-state Dems Sour on Clinton," dyn.politico.com, 15.1.08; Bob Benenson, "Obama Must See Red (States) to Build Electoral Cushion," cqpolitics.com, 29.2.08; Ari Berman, "The Dean Legacy," *The Nation*, 17.3.08.

¹⁵ For voting percentages in all primaries, see thegreenpapers.com. Politico Partners, "State of the States: Special Edition," dyn.politico.com, 5.12.07; Berman, "War Comes ..."; Greg Giroux, "Beyond the Big Picture: The Who and Where of the Iowa Results," cqpolitics.com, 14.1.08.

¹⁶ Ari Melber, "Inside Clinton's Narrow Comeback," thenation.com, 9.1.08; John Dickerson, "Hillary Hatches a Win," slate.com, 19.1.08; Mike Allen and Ben Smith, "Hillary Clinton Attacks Barack Obama," dyn.politico.com, 13.1.08; William Greider, "Slick Willie Rides Again," thenation.com, 23.1.08.

¹⁷ David Paul Kuhn, "Numbers Expose Candidates Weaknesses," politics1.com, 9.1.08; Mike Mokrzycki, "Women Aid Clinton, Moderates Help McCain," *AP*, 9.1.08.

¹⁸ Josh Marshall, "Those Endorsements ...," talkingpointsmemo.com, 12.1.08; Allen and Smith, "Hillary Clinton Attacks ..."; Kraushaar and Harris, "Red-state Dems"; John Nichols, "Ominous Message for Hillary Clinton," thenation.com, 15.1.08.

¹⁹ "US Presidential Race Gathers Steam Ahead of New Balloting," (*AFP*), *Sunday Times*, 13.1.08; Kathleen Hunter, "Leahy Throws Backing to Obama as Endorsement Battle Continues," cqpolitics.com, 17.1.08.

²⁰ Ari Berman, "Clinton Allies Suppress the Votes in Nevada ...," thenation.com, 15.1.08; "Judge Allows Vegas Casino Votes," bbc.co.uk, 17.1.08; Dickerson, "Hillary Hatches ..."; Michael Tomasky, "Winning Ugly," guardian.co.uk, 19.1.08; Jonathan Allen, "Obama, Clinton Tensions Aired in South Carolina," cqpolitics.com, 24.1.08.

²¹ Bob Moser, "South Carolina: Inside the 'Black Primary,'" *The Nation*, 7/14.1.08; Alex Spillius, "Obama Accuses Hillary of Lying," (*Daily Telegraph*), *The Island*, 23.1.08; Bob Benenson, "Obama Ruled Across Gender, Economic Lines," and "How About That Democratic Turnout," cqpolitics.com, 26.1.08; David Paul Kuhn, "The Exit Polls: Why Obama Won," dyn.politico.com, 27.1.08; Bob Moser, "Dawn in South Carolina," thenation.com, 26.1.08.

²² Caroline Kennedy, "A President Like My Father," nyt.com, 27.1.08; Mike Allen and Carrie Budoff Brown, "Ted Kennedy Embraces Obama," dyn.politico.com, 27.1.08; John Nichols, "Ted Kennedy Prepares to Pass the Mantle to Obama," thenation.com, 27.1.08; Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Kerry Kennedy, "Kennedys for Clinton," latimes.com, 29.1.08; John F. Harris, "Washington Elite Lead Clinton Backlash," dyn.politico.com, 29.1.08; politics1.com 4.2.08.

²³ politics1.com, 24.1.08; Casey Woods and Marc Caputo, "Crist Endorses McCain," miamiherald.com, 26.1.08; Richard E. Berg-Anderson, "Weaned on Muddied Waters," thegreenpapers.com, 28.1.08; Marie Horrigan and Bob Benenson, "McCain, Clinton Win Florida, Claim Super Tuesday Momentum," cqpolitics.com, 30.1.08; Jay Cost, "How McCain Won," realeclearpolitics.com, 30.1.08.

²⁴ politics1.com, 4.2.08.

²⁵ John Nichols, "Ten Tips for Sorting Out Super Tuesday Spin," thenation.com, 5.2.08; Jim VandeHei and Mike Allen, "Five Reasons Hillary Should Be Worried," dyn.politico.com, 6.2.08; Alan Fram, "Exit Polls Nationwide," *AP*, 6.2.08; John Heilemann, "What's Hidden in the Latest Numbers," nymag.com, 6.2.08; politics1.com, 7.2.08.

²⁶ John Nichols, "Edwards Primary: A Key Win for Obama," thenation.com, 8.2.08.

²⁷ Greg Giroux and Bob Benenson, "Obama Has Super Sequel Amid Clinton Campaign Shakeup," cqpolitics.com, 10.2.08; David Corn, "It Ain't Patty Solis's Fault; Blame Hillary Clinton – or Mark Penn," davidcorn.com, 11.2.08; Joshua Green, "Inside the Clinton Shake-up," theatlantic.com, 2.08; Dick Morris, "Why Hillary Will Lose," realeclearpolitics.com, 13.2.08; Frank Rich, "The Audacity of Hopelessness," nyt.com, 24.2.08.

²⁸ Kenneth P. Vogel, Jonathan Martin and Lisa Lerer, "Clinton Badly Needs Virginia Victory," dyn.politico.com, 11.2.08; Bob Moser,

"Virginia Dems — and Republicans — Make Obama's Case," *thenation.com*, 12.2.08.

² John Nichols, "Obama Talks Tough(er) on Trade to Win Wisconsin," *thenation.com*, 13.2.08; Jeff Zolner and Patrick Healy, "Black Leader, a Clinton Ally, Tilts to Obama," *nyl.com*, 15.2.08; Emily Gadel, "SEIU Throws Support to Obama," *opolitics.com*, 15.2.08; David Broder, "Divided Labor Loyalties," *realclearpolitics.com*, 17.2.08.

³ David Paul Kuhn, "Wisconsin Exit Polls Spell Trouble for Clinton," *dyn.politics.com*, 20.2.08; Rachel Kapocornas, "Obama Wins Wisconsin with Another Primary Turnout Binge," *opolitics.com*, 20.2.08.

⁴ Jon Wiener, "1,000 Feminists Oppose Hillary," *thenation.com*, 20.2.08; John Nichols, "Feingold's Vote ...," *thenation.com*, 22.2.08; Richard Whalen, "Volker Endorses Obama," *opolitics.com*, 22.2.08; John Nichols, "Hightower: Obama 'Can' Govern as a Progressive ...," *thenation.com*, 28.2.08; Marc Ambinder, "Sen. Jay Rockefeller Endorses Obama," *theatlantic.com*, 29.2.08.

⁵ Patrick Healy, "Somber Clinton Soldiers On as the Horizon Darkens," *nyl.com*, 24.2.08; Greg Sargent, "New Campaign Hillary Claim: The Media Won Her to Law," *talkingpointmemo.com*, 26.2.08; Peter Brown, "The Somali Dress is Just the Beginning," *realclearpolitics.com*, 28.2.08; John Dickerson, "Most Improved Debater," *slate.com*, 27.2.08; "Ten Reasons Obama Slipped,"

thepressive.com, 5.3.08; John Nichols, "Now It Gets Dangerous for Democrats," *thenation.com*, 5.3.08; Josh Marshall, "Final Thoughts," *talkingpointmemo.com*, 5.3.08; David Corn, "Clinton's Triple Win Sets Up a Long, Ugly Slog to Pennsylvania," *motherjones.com*, 4.3.08.

⁶ "The Exit Polls: What Was Behind Tuesday's Vote," *opolitics.com*, 4.3.08; "How Clinton Won TX and OH," *realclearpolitics.com*, 5.3.08; Corn, "Clinton's Triple Win ...," "2008 Democratic Delegates," *realclearpolitics.com*, 5.3.08; John Nichols, "Finally, McCain and Ron Paul Win ...," *thenation.com*, 5.3.08.

⁷ David Corn, "Clinton's Over-the-Top, Ridiculous, Impossible-to-Justify Ken Starr Ploy — Will It Work?," *opolitics.com*, 7.3.08; An Hernan, "Clinton Does McCain's Bidding ...," *thenation.com*, 7.3.08; John Nichols, "Samantha Power and the Danger of Getola Politics," *thenation.com*, 7.3.08.

⁸ Nichols, "Now It Gets Dangerous ..."

⁹ Jeannine Aversa, "AP Poll: To Fix Economy, Get Out of Iraq," *AP*, 8.2.08.

¹⁰ Tom Hayden, "Washington-Based Antiwar Coalition Re-emerges," *thenation.com*, 28.2.08; Jeremy Scahill, "Obama's Mercenary Position," *The Nation*, 17.3.08.

¹¹ Richard Whalen, "The War Hawks Are Pushing to Move on Iran," *opolitics.com*, 27.2.08. ■

Judy Wate's Campaign is the author of *International Debtors: The Case of Rhoda Miller de Silva*

NEW PAPER BACK edition

NOBODIES to SOMEBODIES

The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka

by

Kumari Jayawardena

Rs. 750/-

Available at the leading bookshops.