After the 2020 Democratic and 2016 Republican Presidential Primaries:
Is this a way to choose presidential candidates?

PATRICK HORST

Patrick Horst is Research Assistant at the Institute of Political Science and Sociology of the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-University of Bonn, North-Rine Westfalia, Germany. His most recent books are Die USA – eine scheiternde Demokratie? *(together with Philipp Adorf and Frank Decker) and* Halbzeitbilanz der Trump-Regierung.

The presidential primaries of 2016 were seen as proof that the parties had finally lost control over the nomination of their presidential candidates. The new rules of the selection process, it was argued, would benefit unconventional, populist candidates such as Trump or Sanders. In contrast, it is argued by some, the 2020 Democratic primaries would have shown that party insiders did have the power to impose the candidate of their choice after all. The argument advanced here, however, is that such a conclusion would be premature. The Democratic contest revealed many of the same problems that plagued the Republicans four years ago. This leaves primary election reform on the agenda, for which some suggestions are made in conclusion.

The 2016 presidential primaries are considered a watershed moment. Donald Trump's victory in the Republican primary, which no one expected, and Bernie Sanders' surprisingly successful showing in the Democratic primary, were said to have rewritten the rules of presidential nominating contests. After it was feared for more than four decades but – with the exception of a brief period in the 1970s – never came to pass (Horst 2014), the parties would finally lose control over the nomination of their national standard bearer (Politico Magazine 2020a). With Trump and Sanders, a new type of candidate – the celebrity politician, the outsider, or the populist – had (nearly) prevailed. If the Democratic primary had not been rigged

in favor of Hillary Clinton, by no means only the populists on the left and right thought, Sanders would have won as well. Trump's success, the narrative went, was a confluence of powerful new currents in U.S. politics: a deregulated campaign finance regime and the associated increase in the power of wealthy individuals on the one hand, enthusiastic small donors on the other; a growing importance of presidential primary debates; a pushing back of established gatekeepers in the parties and the quality media; an increased influence of social media; their skillful instrumentalization and manipulation by the new type of candidate, fringe groups and foreign powers such as Russia. In light of these powerful political transformations, even the authors of the previously authoritative book on presidential primaries revised themselves in the run-up to the 2020 primaries, now claiming that "The party no longer decides" (Cohen et al. 2008; Politico Magazine 2020a).

This paper reviews this narrative and asks whether the rules rewritten in 2016 also shaped the 2020 Democratic primaries. The Republican primaries are not relevant in this context because – unlike the two 2016 nominating contests and the 2020 Democratic race – they were not open contests.[1] In the following pages only the Democratic contest is documented – from the formation of the candidate field in the first half of 2019 to the invisible primary with the 2019/20 presidential primary debates, the four early primaries in February, Super Tuesday on March 3 and the early end of the race after the Wisconsin primary on April 7, 2020. Former Vice President Joe Biden emerged victorious in the nominating contest because the party rallied behind its most promising candidate in a surprise turnaround before and after the South Carolina primary. This could be, and was, interpreted to mean that 2016 may not have been a year of paradigmatic change after all, and that the parties still functioned as gatekeepers.[2]

---

[1] President Trump, who filed his re-election campaign with the FEC on the day of his inauguration, successfully scared off any serious challengers. The RNC threw its weight behind Trump early on, scheduling no debates and encouraging individual states to use winner-takes-all rules in delegate allocation to demonstrate the party's united support for the president. Seven individual states cancelled their contests altogether in the second half of 2019, but this was not a particularly high number compared to 2004, when President George W. Bush was also re-nominated without challengers. See Joshua Putnam 2019.

[2] Masket (2020) even describes the party insiders as a trailblazing force who learned from the mistakes of 2016 and therefore consciously chose Biden in order to distance themselves from an overblown identity politics.

Here, however, it will be argued that such a conclusion would be premature. The 2020 Democratic contest revealed many of the same problems that plagued Republicans (and Democrats) in 2016 already. It was thanks solely to two exceptional factors that party insiders finally took the reins: the existentially felt need to beat Trump, and the impossibility of forcing the public to vote in large droves in the midst of the pandemic. Had it not been for these pressures, which led to the intervention of South Carolina's civil rights icon Jim Clyburn and other party elites in favor of Biden, Sanders would have won the nomination.[3] That leaves primary election reform on the agenda (Pomper 2020).

The Formation of the Democratic Field

As always, the vast majority of candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination declared their candidacy 18 to 22 months before the presidential election. With 29 promising candidates, the 2020 Democratic field was not only the largest in the history of U.S. presidential primaries, but also significantly larger than the 2016 Republican field, which included 17 candidates. The field of candidates was, in principle, of high quality and diversity: one former vice president, eight (former) U.S. senators, four (former) governors, one former U.S secretary, seven (former) U.S. representatives and four – including the last two New York – mayors were among them. Six women ran, more than ever before, three blacks and four candidates of non-European descent: Andrew Yang is of Taiwanese, Tulsi Gabbard of Polynesian, Julián Castro of Mexican and Kamala Harris of Indian-Jamaican origin. Only three candidates at all were not professional politicians and consequently had not yet gained experience in elective office: Yang, Marianne Williamson, and Tom Steyer (Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 here]

---

[3] This is also the result of the post-New Hampshire forecast by Dowdle et al. 2021.

Nevertheless, the field was also perceived as a weak one in which no candidate was really fully convincing and the two favorites were "old, white men" – not exactly identity characteristics that generate enthusiasm in the Democratic Party. U.S. Representative John Delaney was the first candidate to declare himself a presidential contender back in July 2017, but he was not given much of a chance. Andrew Yang and Richard Ojeda were also early starters – New York entrepreneur Yang attracted attention with his call for an unconditional basic income of $1,000 a month and established himself in the field, while Ojeda dropped out again as early as January 2019. Professional politicians announced their candidacies in the first four months of 2019: led by U.S. Representative Gabbard, former Housing Secretary Castro, and U.S. Senator Harris. In February, four other political heavyweights from the U.S. Senate threw their hats into the ring: Cory Booker, Elizabeth Warren, Amy Klobuchar and Bernie Sanders, the progressive, 78-year-old senator from Vermont. Joe Biden, just a year younger and the frontrunner in national polls, waited until late April to declare his candidacy. According to prevailing wisdom among political consultants, one could not wait much longer than April to mount a promising campaign. Candidates like Michael Bennet, Steve Bullock, Bill de Blasio or Deval Patrick were depicted as procrastinators who did not believe in their own chances. It was different with multibillionaires Tom Steyer and Michael Bloomberg, who self-financed their campaigns. They could afford a late start and only entered the race because they saw favorite Biden as a weak candidate (Table 1).

The highly visible "invisible primary" and the Democrats' televised debates

The period leading up to the traditionally first Iowa caucus was once considered an "invisible primary" (Horst 2009: 262). Since the 2000 presidential primaries, however, it has become highly visible through extensive media coverage and intraparty televised debates. In this

one-year window of opportunity, presidential contenders are primarily interested in gaining endorsements from influential party members. These include, first and foremost, current and former presidents and vice presidents, national party leaders, U.S. senators, governors, U.S. representatives, state party leaders and national party committee members. Those who win the support of this party establishment, according to the central thesis of "The Party Decides," also do well on the other "fundamentals" (Dowdle et al. 2021) that determine success in the primary. Candidates with strong support among party insiders have an easier time getting party donors, who do not want to invest in a hopeless candidate, to donate; they generate media interest and climb in the national polls. They are also the favorites for the early contests in Iowa and New Hampshire. Those who do well in the two states (more recently supplemented by Nevada and South Carolina), the reasoning goes, are nearly impossible to catch up in subsequent contests. As a result, outsiders hardly stand a chance. Even a surprise victory in Iowa or New Hampshire usually does not give them enough "momentum" (Norrander 2006: 487-89) to beat the established favorite. Nominating contests are not won with surprise victories; they are a long attrition game that forces one candidate after another to drop out (Cohen et al. 2008: 187-234).

According to Wayne Steger and Justin Vaughn, two scenarios can be theoretically distinguished as to how presidential nomination contests can unfold (Steger and Vaughn 2018: 133-37): In the first scenario, party insiders unite behind an uncontested candidate who enjoys great prestige in the party and usually leads with a wide margin in national opinion polls. In 1992, for example, this was the case with Bill Clinton and in 2000 with Vice President Al Gore. In 2016, Hillary Clinton managed to unite almost the entire party establishment behind her, while Bernie Sanders was almost without any endorsement from his colleagues in Congress. The second scenario lacks such an uncontroversial candidate, which is why party insiders appear indecisive and undecided. They avoid settling on a candidate for as long as possible and leave it to the open competition for a favorite to emerge. The last time this happened

with the Democrats was in 1988 and 2004. The prime example of this scenario, however, was provided by the 2016 Republican nomination contest, when so many weak candidates competed with each other that party insiders preferred to remain on the sidelines (Steger 2016). Until July 2015, when Trump declared his candidacy and immediately moved to the top of the field, eight different candidates had topped national polls but never achieved more than 15 percent approval (RealClear Politics 2016). Jeb Bush, the party establishment's weak favorite, had managed to collect $150 million in donations by the eve of Iowa but barely a handful of endorsements (Horst 2016: 156-57).

The 2020 Democratic contest is more likely to fall into the second scenario: True, party insiders favored Biden who continuously led the national polls until shortly before Iowa. Also, the approval rate of just over 30 percent (RealClear Politics 2020) for the frontrunner throughout 2019 was twice as high as for Jeb Bush in the first half of 2015. Still, the Democratic Party was hardly less divided than the Republicans, who, according to one knowledgeable analysis, had (and have) at least four "faces": a "moderate-liberal," a "somewhat conservative," a "very conservative-evangelical," and a "very conservative-secular" one (Olsen and Scala 2016).[4] Democrats, in contrast, were not only ideologically divided into a progressive and moderate wing, but moreover into groups composed of a mishmash of ideology and identity: moderate, majority-white party loyalists; progressive, also predominantly white leftists; younger, socially and ecologically-minded millennials of greater diversity, blacks, and Hispanics (Silver 2019).

In this confusing intra-party tangle, even Democratic party insiders avoided settling on a favorite early on. Of the 282 Democrats in Congress, 42 (15 percent) had backed Biden by the eve of Iowa, 13 had made a pledge of support for Warren (less than five percent) and eight for Sanders (just under 3 percent). More than 70 percent of Democratic members of Congress were

---

[4] Silver (2015) even identified five groupings within the party: the establishment wing, the moderate wing, the Tea Party, libertarians and Christian conservatives.

still waiting to make an endorsement (Marcos 2020). It was the same story in the wider party establishment. By year-end 2019, only about a quarter, and by the eve of Iowa, a third, of the party establishment had issued an endorsement. Biden was backed by just eight of 100 party insiders at year-end 2019. A month later on the eve of Iowa, that number was 11 percent. All other promising Democratic candidates were in the low single digits, if they were able to attract a single endorsement at all, which only 18 of the 29 candidates were able to do (Table 2).

[Insert Table 2 here]

Two other factors contributed significantly to the size and confusion of the Democratic field of candidates: campaign finance and debate participation rules. Thanks to Supreme Court jurisprudence, campaign finance in the U.S. is now so deregulated that there are hardly any financial hurdles for individual candidates (Hebenstreit 2020) – even not for those candidates who, like Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren, largely forgo soliciting corporate donations from Super PACs. Thanks to the Internet, social media and a website like "ActBlue," donations can be generated en masse even from small donors – provided a candidate is able to mobilize an enthusiastic following. Sanders and Warren – as well as Pete Buttigieg who had good relations with Wall Street – were better financed than Biden for long stretches of the primary campaign. Kamala Harris' candidacy did not fail because of money either. The two multibillionaires Steyer and Bloomberg, who self-financed their campaigns, had almost inexhaustible money resources. (Table 3).

[Insert Table 3 here]

The internal party rules for participation in the televised debates were deliberately formulated generously to allow as many candidates as possible to participate. In total, the DNC

(2018) had scheduled twelve TV debates, six in the second half of 2019 and another six from January to April 2020 (Table 4). There was a polling criterion and a fundraising criterion, at least one of which had to be achieved – and both of them starting with the third debate. The poll criterion required a one percent approval threshold for the first two debates, which had to be exceeded in at least three polls at the national level or in the first four primary states. The fundraising criterion required donations from 65,000 individuals, with a minimum of 200 individual donors in at least 20 states (DNC 2019). For subsequent debates, these thresholds were cautiously increased, cutting the number of participants from 20 to ten for the third televised debate. This still meant that there were too many participants on the podium, but the debate could at least be held on one day and no longer had to be spread over two evenings. From the sixth debate in December 2019 until the tenth in Charleston (South Carolina) on February 25, 2020, there were six to seven candidates on the stage. However, the debates fulfilled a certain selection function: only five participants were consistently present from the first to the tenth debate in South Carolina; they were the ones among whom the Democratic presidential candidate had to be found. Biden, Sanders, Warren, Buttigieg and Klobuchar.

[Insert Table 4 here]

As might be expected according to the logic of horce race journalism, the coverage of the debates was less about the substantive issues than about who could take a hit and who got hit. On the second night of the first debate in Miami (Florida), Kamala Harris managed to take a swipe at frontrunner Biden by skewering his comments about working well with white segregationists in the Senate and his opposition to "busing" five decades ago. Harris, in all innocence and after assuring that she did not think Biden was a racist, pointed out that in the early 1970s a little girl in Berkeley, California, had also benefited from this national program. While Biden, who was looking down in shock, was speechless, she followed up with: "And

this little girl was me" (Flegenheimer and Burns 2019). The punch sat: Biden sank below the 30 percent mark in national polls in early July, Harris captured second place in the rankings for a few days, but failed to capitalize on her moment. Serious organizational shortcomings of her campaign were blamed for the failure of her once-promising candidacy (Martin et al. 2019). She withdrew from the race as early as early December 2019 (Cadelago and Oprysko 2019; Table 5).

[Insert Table 5 here]

The following four debates in the summer and fall of 2019 were somewhat quieter. From the sixth debate in Los Angeles (California) onward, the stakes were raised again as the first contest in Iowa approached. In December, despite mixed debate performances, a weak campaign organization and sparse donations, Biden still led the field, followed by the more agile Sanders and Warren. The senator from Massachusetts in particular had strong appearances in the debates and had been able to present a plan on almost every issue (Warren 2021), but had then fallen behind Sanders again. The reasons for this development were difficult to grasp. Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez's endorsement of Sanders after his minor heart attack in October and Warren's hesitation to formulate a plan for "health insurance for all" were probably the main causes of her plunge in the polls, along with Warren's professorial style. When she finally presented a plan in November, it satisfied no one (Alter 2020).

Meanwhile, Pete Buttigieg, the young, openly gay and smart mayor of South Bend (Indiana), had moved up to fourth place in the national polls, even leading the polls in Iowa as of November (FiveThirtyEight 2020). Buttigieg was attacked from all sides at the Los Angeles podium, most notably by Warren and Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar. Warren managed a vivid characterization of Buttigieg's dependence on wealthy big donors, dubbing them "billionaires in wine cellars." Klobuchar promoted herself on the grounds of electability, not

forgetting to point out that Buttigieg, at 37, was far too inexperienced for the presidency. Moreover, he had not been able to win a statewide election in his home state of Indiana or the election for chairman of the national party committee (Martin 2019). Then, in the run-up to the seventh debate in Des Moines, Iowa, the truce agreement between Sanders and Warren was also terminated. After the Sanders campaign criticized Warren's supporters as elitist, Warren complained that Sanders had told her at a meeting two years ago that a woman could not be elected president. Sanders vehemently denied this account and accused Warren of lying. Warren did not repeat her accusation publicly, but refused to shake hands with Sanders after the debate (Martin and Herndon 2020).

The four early primaries in February, Super Tuesday, and the pandemic-triggered end of the primaries ahead of schedule

The 2020 Iowa caucuses, traditional kickoffs to the primaries, turned into a fiasco for the Democrats for a number of reasons. The event was overshadowed by Donald Trump's impeachment in Washington, which was in its final throes and tied three of the five candidates, namely Senators Klobuchar, Sanders and Warren, in the federal capital (Kruse 2020). A number of campaign events for the three senators had to be cancelled as a result, benefiting Buttigieg in particular, who had a strong presence in Iowa. The last election poll before the caucus, which is traditionally commissioned by the Des Moines Register newspaper and CNN, fell victim to an error. As a result, no one knew in advance which of the candidates was ahead in the polls (Siders 2020).

Then, on caucus day, there were further glitches: The election workers were not sufficiently trained to implement the new rules introduced at the instigation of Sanders supporters after 2016; there were uncertainties in the organization of the events, irregularities in the counting and, above all, the reporting of the votes counted. For the first time, a smartphone

app was used for this purpose, but it did not work, so the results had to be reported by phone

to the Democratic Party headquarters in Iowa. This also worked poorly, however, and no win-

ner could be announced on election night. By the time the results seemed to be in after a two-

day delay, they were so close and fraught with doubt that it was not clear whether Sanders or

Buttigieg had won. Sanders had a razor-thin lead in votes, Buttigieg in delegates. The momen-

tum that a victory would normally have brought did not occur for either candidate – in part

because on February 5 Trump's acquittal in the impeachment trial superseded all other news

(Horst 2020a). It was not overlooked, however, that Biden had only finished a distant fourth

(Korecki et al. 2020a; Alberta 2020; McCaskill 2020; Table 6).

[Insert Table 6 here]

The New Hampshire primary, where Biden finished a disappointing fifth, solidified the

impression that the momentum of the primary had turned in Sanders' favor. After New Hamp-

shire, nervousness on the moderate wing of the party increased noticeably. Some of the party

insiders, the majority of whom still backed Biden, flirted with supporting former New York

Mayor Michael Bloomberg who had entered the race late, but had catapulted himself to third

place in the national polls by mid-February with investments of $400 million. He had an-

nounced plans to invest a total of up to $1 billion in the campaign – which he ended up doing

(Table 3) – and thus, despite his 78 years, appeared to many to be the best candidate to beat

Trump in November (Ferris et al. 2020; Burns and Kulish 2020). The DNC had changed the

rules specifically for Bloomberg to allow him to participate in the televised debates in Nevada

and South Carolina (Montellaro et al. 2020).[5] On the podium, however, it became apparent that

financial strength and name recognition alone do not make a strong candidate. Bloomberg's

---

[5] As a wholly self-financed candidate, he was bound to fail the fundraising criterion. However, because he scored more than ten percent in four relevant polls, he qualified for the ninth debate in Nevada and the tenth in South Carolina.

competitors, most notably Elizabeth Warren, criticized him for his controversial "stop-and-frisk" policy as mayor of New York, his derogatory remarks about women and the muzzling of former female staffers who had been severed after allegations of sexual harassment. Bloomberg failed to convincingly rebuff the attacks (Burns and Martin 2020c).

In Nevada and South Carolina, Bloomberg did participate in the debates; however, he was not yet on the ballot. Because of his late entry into the race, he had all his cards on Super Tuesday. In Nevada, Sanders won again, this time by a wide margin over Biden, who narrowly edged Buttigieg for second place (Table 6). If the moderate wing of the party had grown nervous after New Hampshire, it was now downright shocked and frustrated. Sanders seemed almost unstoppable, especially since he had also won a majority of Hispanic voters (50 percent) in Nevada. The only bright spot for Biden was that, according to Nevada entrance polls, he won a relative majority of black voters (38 percent) and was ahead of Sanders (28 percent) in this voter group. Biden's two moderate competitors, Buttigieg and Klobuchar, failed to gain significant support among black and Hispanic voters (CNN 2020a).

With Bloomberg badly battered after his upsetting debate performance, in the week leading up to the South Carolina primary all the hopes of moderate Democrats were once again focused on Biden. Because fears were high that Sanders would not only lose to Trump but possibly also the House of Representatives, party insiders had to act quickly. Just one day after the Nevada caucus, South Carolina's civil rights icon and House majority whip Jim Clyburn endorsed Biden. The value of this announcement and its timing – there were two days left until the Charleston debate and six days left until Election Day in South Carolina – cannot be overstated: Clyburn became the "kingmaker" in the Democratic nomination contest by saving Biden's candidacy (Korecki et al. 2020b). The latter's victory on February 29 became the expected blowout, winning him 49 percent of the vote (Table 6). Black voters flocked to the ballot box, representing 56 percent of Democrats and voting 61 percent for Biden (CNN 2020b).

Biden desperately needed the victory in South Carolina and the momentum it created to be competitive on Super Tuesday, which took place in 14 states just three days later. Neither Biden nor his campaign organization had set foot in many of these states – all the more remarkable was his victory march through ten Super Tuesday states, including all five Southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas). Sanders won only four states, including delegate-rich California, and the caucus of Democrats abroad. Bloomberg won only the American Samoa caucus, where 175 votes sufficed to net him four delegates (The Green Papers 2021a; Table 7). Buttigieg and Klobuchar ended their campaign after South Carolina and endorsed Biden. Other party insiders did likewise: most notably former Senate leader Harry Reid, withdrawn presidential contender Beto O'Rourke, and Illinois Senator Tammy Duckworth (Bycoffe and Dottle 2020). Bloomberg also faced great pressure behind the scenes to withdraw his candidacy to stop Sanders, but still held on (Korecki 2020). A day after his defeat on Super Tuesday, however, he too dropped out. Elizabeth Warren ended her campaign one day later after drawing the ire of Sanders supporters for remaining in the race on Super Tuesday (Table 5).

[Insert Table 7 here]

After Super Tuesday, the race between the once 29 Democratic presidential candidates had become a runoff between Biden and Sanders. The last candidate remaining in the race, beyond the two, Tulsi Gabbard, ran an "expressive campaign."[6] Biden's de facto lead over Sanders was larger than the margin in delegates to the national party convention reflected. This was because the party establishment had clearly demonstrated who it saw as the most promising challenger to Donald Trump, and voters had followed the signals of party insiders.

---

[6] See on this apparently irrational type of candidate, the "hopeless cause" – here referring to candidates for Congress – Boatright 2004: 17-47.

After Super Tuesday, endorsements of Biden accelerated (Table 2). At least as bad for Sanders was that Warren, who was ideologically closest to him, refused to endorse him because it would only have amounted to a useless squandering of political capital (Herndon and Goldmacher 2020). On "Mini Tuesday" (March 10) Biden won five of six states, led by Michigan and Washington, both of which Sanders had won in 2016 (Table 8). This effectively decided the race, which Sanders implicitly conceded: he, Sanders, had „won the ideological debate," but Biden had won the argument to be the better candidate to beat Trump (Burns and Flegenheimer 2020).

[Insert Table 8 here]

Sanders justified his continued stay in the race by saying that he wanted to win over as many delegates as possible to further his policy goals. However, this concern, legitimate in normal times, increasingly clashed with a worsening pandemic that also made voting a public health hazard. The first states had already announced that they would postpone their primaries to a later date. The March 15 TV debate, with only Biden and Sanders still participating, was moved from Phoenix (Arizona) to the nation's capital and held without live viewers under social distancing guidelines. According to expert assessments, the debate was the best of all previous formats: factual, civilized and yet confrontational.[7] Both opponents had strong performances, Biden his strongest of the debate season. The winner was the Democratic Party, which demonstrated strength and unity. Both rivals pledged their mutual support, and Biden committed to nominating a female vice president and a diverse cabinet (Burns and Martin 2020a; Epstein et al. 2020). Biden's victories two days later in Arizona, Florida, and Illinois were overwhelming (Burns and Martin 2020b; Table 8).

---

[7] Compare the judgments of Michael Kazin, Larry Sabato, Jacob Heilbrunn, John Neffinger, Michael Starr Hopkins, and Jennifer Lawless in Politico Magazine 2020b.

In mid-March, Ohio and other states began to postpone their primaries because of an accelerating pandemic. Other states attempted to address the public health crisis by expanding early voting opportunities. Wyoming, which was supposed to vote on April 4 (table 8), banned in-person voting, allowed only absentee voting, and extended the filing deadline by two weeks (Corasanti and Saul 2020a, b; Montellaro 2020). The consensus became increasingly clear that a continuation of the primaries could no longer be justified under the given conditions, and that the focus now had to be first on fighting the pandemic and then on the election campaign against Trump. Democrats canceled the TV debate planned for April and postponed the national party convention by a month to August. Joe Biden hunkered down at home in his basement, conducted the election campaign almost exclusively online, and left it to "Superman" Trump to produce negative headlines anew every day "in the hopeless battle against the deadly virus" (Horst 2020b).

In the battleground state of Wisconsin, which was to decide the Democratic primary, the main election campaign was already looming, this time also fought over voting rights and election administration. The Democrats initially did not want to postpone the election, but instead wanted to facilitate absentee voting through various measures. This was opposed by the Republicans, who controlled the state legislature, with the argument pushed by President Trump that this would lead to massive voter fraud. As a result, Governor Tony Evers, a Democrat, tried to move the election by executive order but was stopped by his state's Supreme Court. In another lawsuit, the federal Supreme Court ruled that extending the deadline for submitting absentee ballots by six days beyond Election Day was unlawful (Liptak 2020). Many of the 1,55 million voters, which equated to a 35.6 percent turnout in the midst of the pandemic (McDonald 2021b), were forced to cast their ballots in person. Nearly 63 percent of Democrats voted for Biden on April 7 (Table 8). A day later, Sanders officially conceded defeat (Table 5).

The Reform Debate: Why This Is No Way to Select a Presidential candidate

It went well once again. Joe Biden, the favorite of mostly moderate party insiders, emerged victorious in the Democratic nomination contest. Self-declared "democratic socialist" Bernie Sanders was stopped at the last minute by combined forces of party insiders and Democratic voters in South Carolina and Super Tuesday states. Despite the onset of the pandemic and a relatively early decision on April 7, voters participated in record numbers in the Democratic primary, with more than 42 million voters casting ballots, up from 37 million in 2008 and 31 million in 2016. The number represented 18.2 percent of eligible voters and was just 1.3 percentage points below the 2008 record (McDonald 2020b; DeSilver 2016; Corasanti and Grullón Paz 2020). High voter participation in the Democratic primaries laid the groundwork for Biden's victory over Donald Trump in the presidential election, in which more than 158 million voters and 66.1 percent of eligible Americans participated – more than at any time in the 20th and 21st centuries (McDonald 2021a). More than 81 million Americans voted for Biden, seven million more than for Trump. In the Electoral College, too, the final margin of 306 votes to 232 was clearer than the dramaturgy of the vote count would have suggested (FEC 2021). So, everything is fine?

Not at all. Biden's victory was a stroke of luck that would never have come about under normal circumstances. Even if it may seem to some to be no more than intellectual gamesmanship to engage in hypothetical courses of world history (Cowley 2002), the Democrats would be well advised not to forget what would have happened if John Clyburn, Amy Klobuchar and Pete Buttigieg had not backed Biden at crucial moments in the nominating contest. It would not have been Biden who would have been chosen as the presidential candidate, but Sanders. This would have been the constellation preferred by Republicans and intensely feared by Democratic party insiders. The loss of the presidential election and of both houses of Congress would have been certain for Democrats – with all the disastrous consequences for them, but also for U.S. democracy as a whole. The Democrats – and, after their

experience four years ago, the Republicans as well – should therefore not only take a hard look at the shortcomings of their nominating contests, but should indeed find the courage to reform them. The lessons to be learned from 2016 and 2020 are numerous and cannot be adequately discussed here. At least five should be mentioned in conclusion.

First, the Republican field in 2016 and the Democratic field in 2020 were far too large. Ways must be found to limit them from the start. Choosing between 17 or 29 candidates overwhelms voters and increases their decision paralysis. Those who have too many options at their disposal cannot commit because they are afraid of choosing the wrong option too early – FOBO, „Fear Of a Better Option," is what one observer of the Democratic primaries has called this problem (McGinnis 2020).

Second, the televised debates sanctioned by the respective national party committees face similar problems. With participant numbers of up to a dozen, they are far too large, especially at the beginning, to ensure meaningful substantive debate. The media's attention is therefore focused on personal performances and appearances, on who gives their opponents the most effective punches or who parries their attacks most effectively. It would also be worth discussing whether a dozen such debates are really needed and whether they need to start as early as the summer of the previous year.

Third, the fiasco in Iowa (Pager 2020) has shown the world that the time of the caucus – long criticized as an anachronism (Holste 2011) – has finally come. Already after 2016, the Democratic Party, at the behest of Sanders supporters, pushed to reduce their numbers in favor of primaries and to report voters' first preferences separately from the final results (Democrats 2017: 1-10, 18-19). In 2020, Democrats held only four caucuses at all – in Iowa, Nevada, North Dakota, and Wyoming (which switched to all-mail voting). In addition to Iowa's organizational problems, the fourth-place finish of the eventual nominee has reignited the old argument that Iowa's first-in-the-nation status can no longer be justified because of the state's lack of demographic representation. This argument applies equally to New Hampshire, which

does not adequately reflect the increased diversity of the United States either (Moore and Smith 2015; Kamarck 2019: 55-86). Biden actually finished only fifth in New Hampshire, which under normal circumstances would have spelled doom for him. Harry Reid, the former Senate Democratic leader, argued in February 2020 that only primaries should be held in the future. He called for his home state Nevada, with its relevant share of Hispanics, to move into first place ahead of Iowa and New Hampshire (Epstein 2020). With equal justification, this could be demanded for South Carolina because of its high proportion of black voters. To ease the transition from caucus to primary, ranked-choice voting could be used because it is essentially a functional equivalent to a caucus (Jacobson 2020).[8]

Fourth, there has already been a growing awareness in the United States that election integrity is not at its best in numerous states (Horst 2019). The pandemic has brought the urgency of reforms in election administration into sharper focus. For primaries, the issues include facilitated registration, absentee voting, and early voting. The Democrats' wishes to expand and ease voting must be reconciled with the Republicans' demands to prevent election fraud, which will not be an easy task. But it would be time for Congress to agree on national standards to curb rampant lawsuits in the courts.[9]

Fifth, the 2016 and 2020 primaries have impressively demonstrated that it is not advisable to further curtail the influence of party insiders. The current rules of the nominating contests already favor unconventional, populist candidates. Outsiders and unconventional candidates have an interest in further strengthening the populist elements in the process and weakening the influence of party insiders. At the behest of the Sanders wing in the Democratic Party, after 2016 superdelegates were stripped of their voting rights for the first ballot at the national party convention. This became irrelevant for the 2020 Democratic nomination

---

[8] In Alaska, Hawaii, Kansas, and Wyoming, ranked choice voting has been used in the 2020 Democratic primaries. In the Nevada caucus, it has been made available for absentee voting.

[9] Democrats made a number of sensible proposals to this end at the very beginning of the newly elected 117th Congress in the "For the People Act of 2021" (U.S. House 2021).

because party insiders had already agreed on their favorite beforehand. Democrats would be well advised, however, not to rely on such extraordinary coordination for the future, but to consider strengthening peer review. There would be a number of ways to do this: restoring superdelegates to their former rights, an endorsement of presidential candidates by a national party convention prior to the primaries, or a preceding vote of confidence by party insiders (Kamarck 2017; LaRaja and Rauch 2020; Rozell 2020). The problem with all of these reforms is that they run counter to the "dominant American method" of trying "to solve problems of democracy with more democracy" (Cain 2014).

References

Alberta, Tim. 2020. "The Death of Iowa." *Politico*, February 4.

Alter, Charlotte. 2020. "What Went Wrong for Elizabeth Warren." *Time*, March 3.

Boatright, Robert G. 2004. *Expressive Politics. Issue Strategies of Congressional Challengers*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Burns, Alexander, and Matt Flegenheimer. 2020. "Bernie Sanders Made a Big Concession Speech. Just Not the Usual Kind." *New York Times*, March 11.

Burns, Alexander, and Nicholas Kulish. 2020. "Bloomberg's Billions: How the Candidate Built an Empire of Influence." *New York Times*, February 15.

Burns, Alexander, and Jonathan Martin. 2020a. "Biden and Sanders Fight Over Policy and Records in Head-to-Head-Debate." *New York Times*, March 15.

Burns, Alexander, and Jonathan Martin. 2020b. "Biden Sweeps Three States and Takes Commanding Leads, as Virus Reshapes American Politics." *New York Times*, March 17.

Burns, Alexander, and Jonathan Martin. 2020c. "Warren Leads Onslaught of Attacks, Zeroing In on Bloomberg." *New York Times*, February 19.

Bycoffe, Aaron, and Rachael Dottle. 2020. "The 2020 Endorsement Primary." *FiveThirtyEight*, April 8. https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2020-endorsements/democratic-primary/ (Accessed: February 19, 2021).

Cadelago, Christopher, and Caitlin Oprysko. 2019. "'One of the hardest decisions of my life": Kamala Harris ends once-promising campaign." *Politico*, December.

Cain, Bruce E. 2014. "Populist Illusions and Pluralist Realities." *The American Interest*, November/December. https://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/10/03/populist-illusions-and-pluralist-realities/ (Accessed: February 22, 2021).

CNN. 2020a. "Nevada Entrance Polls." https://edition.cnn.com/election/2020/primaries-caucuses/entrance-and-exit-polls/nevada/democratic (Accessed: February 18, 2021).

CNN. 2020b. "South Carolina Exit Polls." https://edition.cnn.com/election/2020/primaries-caucuses/entrance-and-exit-polls/south-carolina/democratic (Accessed: February 18, 2021).

Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2008. *The Party Decides. Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*. Chicago & London: Chicago University Press.

Corasanti, Nick, Isabelle Grullón Paz. 2020. "High Voter Turnout and Record Fund-Raising Give Democrats Hope for November." *New York Times*, July 21.

Corasanti, Nick, and Stephanie Saul. 2020a. "Ohio's Governor Postpones Primary as Health Emergency Is Declared Over Virus." *New York Times*, March 16.

Corasanti, Nick, and Stephanie Saul. 2020b. "Voting by Mail Is the Hot New Idea. Is There Time to Make It Work." *New York Times*, March 19.

Cowley, Robert (ed.). 2002. *What If? II: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*. New York: Berkley Books.

Democrats. 2017. "Report of the Unity Reform Commission." December 8/9, https://democrats.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/URC_Report_FINAL.pdf (Accessed: February 22, 2021).

DNC. 2018. "DNC Announces Framework for the 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary Debates." December 20. https://democrats.org/news/dnc-announces-framework-for-the-2020-democratic-presidential-primary-debates/ (Accessed: February 16, 2021).

DNC. 2019. "DNC Announces Details for the first two Presidential Primary Debates." February 14. https://democrats.org/news/dnc-announces-details-for-the-first-two-presidential-primary-debates/ (Accessed: February 16, 2021).

Dowdle, Andrew J., Randall E. Adkins, Karen Sebold, and Wayne P. Steger. 2021. "Fundamentals Matter: Forecasting the 2020 Democratic Presidential Nomination." *PS: Politics & Political Science* 54(1): 41 – 46.

Drew DeSilver. 2016. "Turnout was high in the 2016 primary season, but just short of 2008 record." *Pew Research Center*, June 10.

Epstein, Reid J. 2020. "Harry Reid Says Nevada Should Have a Primary: 'All Caucuses Should Be a Thing of the Past.'" *New York Times*, February 23.

Epstein, Reid J., Katie Glueck, and Shane Goldmacher. 2020. "Six Takeaways From the March Democratic Debate." *New York Times*, March 16.

FEC. 2021. "Official 2020 Presidential General Election Results." https://www.fec.gov/resources/cms-content/documents/2020presgeresults.pdf (Accessed: February 21, 2021).

Ferris, Sarah, Heather Caygle, and Marianne Levine. 2020. "Centrist Democrats rethink alliances as Biden crumble." *Politico*, February 12.

FiveThirtyEight. 2020. "Latest Polls. Who's Ahead in Iowa?" https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/polls/president-primary-d/iowa/ (Accessed: February 17, 2021).

Flegenheimer, Matt, and Alexander Burns. 2019. "Kamala Harris Makes the Case That Joe Biden Should Pass That Torch to Her." *New York Times*, June 27.

Hebenstreit, Jörg. 2020. *Wahlkampffinanzierung und Demokratie in den USA*, Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Herndon, Astead W., and Shane Goldmacher. 2020. "Elizabeth Warren Is Unlikely to Endorse Bernie Sanders. Here's Why." *New York Times*, March 11.

Holste, Heiko. 2011. "Das Orakel der Maisfelder. Oder: wie der Iowa-Caucus wirklich funktioniert." *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 42(2): 270 – 285.

Horst, Patrick. 2009. "Die Präsidentschaftsvorwahlen der US-Demokraten 2008: Wie Barack Obama gegen Hillary Clinton gewann." *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 40(2): 259 – 279.

Horst, Patrick. 2014. "Die unendliche Reform des präsidentiellen Nominierungsprozesses in den USA. " In *Parteien und Demokratie. Innerparteiliche Demokratie im Wandel*, eds. Ursula Münch, Uwe Kranenpohl, and Henrik Gast. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 75 – 92.

Horst, Patrick 2016. "Die populistische Revolte in den USA – Donald Trump und die Zukunft der Republikanischen Partei." *Gesellschaft ·Wirtschaft · Politik* 65(2): 153 – 161.

Horst, Patrick. 2019. "Wählerausweisgesetze in den Einzelstaaten – Bekämpfung des Wahlbetrugs oder Wahlunterdrückung?" In *Die USA – eine scheiternde Demokratie?* eds. Patrick Horst, Philipp Adorf, and Frank Decker. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 109 – 128.

Horst, Patrick. 2020a. "Die gescheiterte Amtsenthebung von Präsident Trump. Verfassungslage, Verfahren, Vorgeschichte und bilanzierender Vergleich." In *Dossier USA*, ed. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. June 26, https://www.bpb.de/internationales/amerika/usa/310933/die-gescheiterte-amtsenthebung-von-praesident-trump (Accessed: February 18, 2021).

Horst, Patrick. 2020b. "Wahlkampf in den USA: Der entfesselte, unmaskierte Präsident. Superman im aussichtslosen Kampf gegen das tödliche Virus." *regierungsforschung.de*,

October 27. https://regierungsforschung.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/27102020_re-gierungsforschung.de_Horst_Wahlkampf_Trump.pdf (Accessed: February 20, 2021).

Jacobson, Louis. 2020. "The Rise of Ranked-Choice Voting." *Sabato's Crystall Ball*, July 2.

Kamarck, Elaine C. 2017. "Re-inserting peer review in the American presidential nomination process." *Brookings.edu*, April 27.

Kamarck, Elaine C. 2019. *Primary Politics. Everything You Need to Know About How America Nominates Its Presidential Candidates*. 3rd ed. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Korecki, Natasha. 2020. "Moderates close ranks around Biden on eve of Super Tuesday." *Politico*, March 2.

Korecki, Natesha, and David Siders. 2020. "Sanders sends Democratic establishment into panic mode." *Politico*, February 23.

Korecki, Natasha, David Siders, and Alex Thompson. 2020a. "'It's a total meltdown': Confusion seizes Iowa as officials struggle to report results." *Politico*, February 3.

Korecki, Natasha, Heather Caygle, Marc Caputo, and Laura Barrón-López. 2020b. "Clyburn poised to endorse Biden in big boost before S.C. primary." *Politico*, February 23.

Kruse, Michael. 2020. "'We Don't Want to F--- It Up': How Trump Got Inside Iowa's Head." *Politico Magazine*, February 3.

LaRaja, Rajmond J., and Jonathan Rauch. 2020. "Voters need help: How party insiders can make presidential primaries safer, fairer, and more democratic." *Brookings.edu*, January 31.

Liptak, Adam. 2020. "Supreme Court Blocks Extended Voting in Wisconsin." *New York Times*, April 6.

Marcos, Cristina. 2020. "Biden leads 2020 pack in congressional endorsements." *The Hill*, January 26.

Martin, Jonathan, and Astead W. Herndon. 2020. "Sanders and Warren Try to Tone Down Rift. Some of Their Supporters Seem Less Willing." *New York Times*, January 18.

Martin, Jonathan, Astead W. Herndon, and Alexander Burns. 2019. "How Kamala Harris's Campaign Unraveled." *New York Times*, November 29.

Masket, Seth. 2020. *Learning from Loss. The Democrats 2016–2020*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCaskill, Nolan D. 2020. "Buttigieg and Sanders separated by razor-thin margin with Iowa count nearly done." *Politico*, February 5.

McDonald, Michael. 2021a. "National General Election VEP Turnout Rates, 1789 – Present." *United States Elections Project*. http://www.electproject.org/national-1789-present (Accessed: February 20, 2021).

McDonald, Michael. 2021b. "Presidential Nomination Contest Turnout Rates." *United States Elections Project*. http://www.electproject.org/2020p (Accessed: February 20, 2021).

McGinnis, Patrick J. 2020. "Is FOBO Paralyzing the Democratic Primary?" *Politico Magazine*, January 26.

Montellaro, Zach. 2020. "Everything to know about states moving and changing their primaries over coronavirus." *Politico*, March 20.

Montellaro, Zach, Sally Goldenberg, and Christopher Cadelago. 2020. "DNC overhauls debate requirements, opening door for Bloomberg." *Politico*, January 31.

Moore, David W., Andrew E. Smith. 2015. *The First Primary. New Hampshire's Outsize Role on Presidential Nominations*. Durham: University of New Hampshire Press.

Barbara Norrander, 2006. "The Attrition Game: Initial Resources, Initial Contests and the Exit of Candidates during the US Presidential Primary Season." *British Journal of Political Science* 36(1): 487 – 507.

Olsen, Henry, and Dante J. Scala. 2016. *The Four Faces of the Republican Party: The Fight for the 2016 Presidential Nomination*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pager, Tyler. 2020. "Iowa autopsy report: DNC meddling led to caucus debacle." *Politico*, December 12.

Politico Magazine. 2020a. "The New Rules of Campaigning in 2020." February 3.

Politico Magazine. 2020b. "Bye Bye Bernie." March 16.

Pomper, Gerald. 2020. "The Cleaner 'Smoke-Filled Room.'" *Sabato's Crystal Ball*, March 26.

Putnam, Joshua. 2019. "2020 Primary and Caucus Cancellations Through the Lens of Recent History." *Sabato's Crystal Ball*, September 26.

RealClear Politics. 2016. "2016 Republican Presidential Nomination." https://www.realclear-politics.com/epolls/2016/president/us/2016_republican_presidential_nomination-3823.html#polls (Accessed: February 15, 2021).

RealClear Politics. 2020. "Democratic Presidential Nomination." https://www.realclearpoli-tics.com/epolls/2020/president/us/2020_democratic_presidential_nomination-6730.html#polls (Accessed: February 15, 2021).

Rozell, Mark J., 2020. "Is this any way to pick a president?" *The Hill*, March 1.

Siders, David. 2020. "'We're flying blind': Democrats floored by star-crossed primary." *Politico*, February 2.

Silver, Nate. 2015. "Romney and the GOP's Five-Ring Circus." *FiveThirtyEight*, January 12.

Silver, Nate. 2019. "The 5 Corners of the 2020 Democratic Primary." *FiveThirtyEight*, January 10.

Steger, Wayne P. 2016. "Conditional Arbiters: The Limits of Political Party Influence in Presidential Nominations." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 49(4), 709 – 715.

Steger, Wayne and Justin Vaughn. 2018. "Die Präsidentschaftsvorwahlen – ein populistischer Irrtum?" In *Die USA – eine scheiternde Demokratie?* eds. Patrick Horst, Philipp Adorf und Frank Decker. Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 129 – 147.

The Green Papers. 2021a. "2020 Presidential Primaries, Caucuses, and Conventions. American Samoa Democrat." https://www.thegreenpapers.com/P20/AS-D#0303 (Accessed: February 18, 2021).

The Green Papers, 2021b. "2020 Presidential Primaries, Caucuses, and Conventions. Major Events Chronologically." https://www.thegreenpapers.com/P20/events.phtml?s=c&f=m (Accessed: February 14, 2021).

U.S. House of Representatives (117th Congress). 2021. "H.R. 1 – For the People Act of 2021." https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1/text#toc-H0C72CA940E684A0986583236950CC71E (Accessed: February 22, 2021).

Warren, Elizabeth. 2021. "Plans." https://elizabethwarren.com/plans (Accessed: February 23, 2021).

Wikipedia, 2021a. "2020 Democratic Party presidential debates." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Democratic_Party_presidential_debates (Accessed: February 24, 2021).

Wikipedia, 2021b. "2020 Democratic Party presidential primaries." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Democratic_Party_presidential_primaries (Accessed: February 24, 2021).

TABLE 1
Declared Candidates for the 2020 Democratic Presidential Nomination

Candidate (Age 02/03/20)	Last political office (Profession)	Announcement
1. John Delaney (56)	US Rep. from Maryland (2013-19)	07/28/2017
2. Andrew Yang (45)	(Entrepreneur from New York)	11/06/2017
3. Richard Ojeda (49)	State Senator from West Virginia (2016-19)	11/11/2018
4. Tulsi Gabbard (38)	US Rep. from Hawaii (2013-)	01/11/2019
5. Julián Castro (45)	US Housing Secretary (2014¬17)	01/12/2019
6. Kamala Harris (55)	US Senator from California (2017-)	01/21/2019
7. Marianne Williamson (67)	(Author from California)	01/28/2019
8. Cory Booker (50)	US Senator from New Jersey (2013-)	02/01/2019
9. Elizabeth Warren (70)	US Senator from Massachusetts (2013-)	02/09/2019
10. Amy Klobuchar (59)	US Senator from Minnesota (2007-)	02/10/2019
11. Bernie Sanders (78)	US Senator from Vermont (2007-)	02/19/2019
12. Jay Inslee (68)	Governor of Washington (2013-)	03/01 /2019
13. John Hickenlooper (67)	Governor of Colorado (2011-19)	03/04/2019
14. Beto O'Rourke (47)	US Rep. from Texas (2013-19)	03/14/2019
15. Kirsten Gillibrand (53)	US Senator from New York (2009-)	03/17/2019
16. Wayne Messam (45)	Mayor of Miramar, Florida (2015-)	03/28/2019
17. Mike Gravel (89)	US Senator from Alaska (1969-81)	04/02/2019
18. Tim Ryan (46)	US Rep. from Ohio (2013-)	04/04/2019
19. Eric Swalwell (39)	US Rep. from California (2013-)	04/08/2019
20. Pete Buttigieg (38)	Mayor of South Bend, Indiana (2012-20)	04/14/2019
21. Seth Moulton (41)	US Rep. from Massachusetts (2015-)	04/22/2019
22. Joe Biden (77)	US Vice President (2009-17)	04/25/2019
23. Michael Bennet (55)	US Senator from Colorado (2009-)	05/02/2019
24. Steve Bullock (53)	Governor of Montana (2013-)	05/14/2019
25. Bill De Blasio (58)	Mayor of New York City (2014-)	05/16/2019
26. Joe Sestak (68)	US Rep. from Pennsylvania (2007-11)	06/23/2019
27. Tom Steyer (62)	(Hedge Fund Manager from California)	07/09/2019
28. Deval Patrick (63)	Governor of Massachusetts (2007-15)	11/14/2019
29. Michael Bloomberg (77)	Mayor of New York City (2002-13)	11/24/2019

Source: Wikipedia 2021b.

TABLE 2
The 2020 Democratic Endorsement Primary

Candidate	12/31/2019		02/02/2020		03/02/2020		04/07/2020	
	Points	%	Points	%	Points	%	Points	%
Biden	178	7.9	254	11.3	380	16.8	777	34.4
Warren	66	2.9	85	3.8	102	4.5	(103)	4.6
Harris	(96)	4.3	(96)	4.3	(96)	4.3	(96)	4.3
Bloomberg	6	0.3	42	1.9	88	3.9	(88)	3.9
Sanders	48	2.1	55	2.4	70	3.1	74	3.3
Booker	62	2.7	(62)	2.7	(62)	2.7	(62)	2.7
Klobuchar	47	2.1	50	2.2	(57)	2.5	(57)	2.5
Buttigieg	24	1.1	34	1.5	(47)	2.1	(47)	2.1
All 18 Candidates with Endorsements	607	26.9	765	33.9	990	43.9	1.392	61.7

Note: The point scale is as follows: Current and former presidents and vice presidents, current national party leaders (10). Current governors (8). Current US senators (6). Past presidential and vice presidential nominees, former national party leaders, withdrawn 2020 presidential candidates who appeared in at least one debate (5). Current US representatives and mayors (3). State party leaders (2). DNC members (1). In total, there were 917 "party insiders" among US Democrats in February 2019, with 2,256 points to assign. Points in parentheses indicate that the candidate had already dropped out of the race at that point in time.
Source: Bycoffe and Dottle 2020.

TABLE 3
Campaign Receipts of the Top Ten Democrats in the 2019/20 Presidential Election Cycle (in millions of US dollars)

Candidate	06/30/2019	12/31/2019	02/29/2020	03/31/2020
1. Bloomberg	-	200,4	936,2	1,063,0
2. Steyer	-	206,3	270,8	347,5
3. Sanders	46,4	109,0	179,7	214,8
4. Biden	22,0	61,0	86,2	134,8
5. Warren	35,7	82,0	120,8	128,4
6. Buttigieg	32,3	76,8	99,7	102,7
7. Klobuchar	12,7	29,0	52,8	54,0
8. Harris	25,1	40,9	40,0	41,1
9. Yang	4,6	31,1	38,0	41,1
10. Booker	12,5	25,1	25,5	26,0

Sources: Federal Election Commission, Center for Responsive Politics.

TABLE 4
The 2020 Democratic Party Presidential Debates

Date	Location	Participants	Viewers in millions
1) 06/26-27/19	Miami, Florida	20	24,3
2) 07/30-31/19	Detroit, Michigan	20	27,1
3) 09/12/19	Houston, Texas	10	14,0
4) 10/15/19	Westerville, Ohio	12	8,8
5) 11/20/19	Atlanta, Georgia	10	7,9
6) 12/19/19	Los Angeles, California	7	14,7
7) 01/14/20	Des Moines, Iowa	6	11,3
8) 02/07/20	Manchester, New Hampshire	7	11,0
9) 02/19/20	Paradise, Nevada	6	33,2
10) 02/25/20	Charleston, South Carolina	7	30,4
11) 03/15/20	Washington, D.C.	2	11,4
12) April 2020	Cancelled	-	-

Source: Wikipedia 2021a.

TABLE 5
The Democrats' Attrition Game 2020

Withdrawn until 08/31/19	Withdrawn until 12/31/19	Withdrawn before Iowa (02/03/20)	After New Hampshire (02/11/20) + South Carolina (02/29/20)	After Super Tuesday (03/03/20)	Winner
Ojeda 01/25 Swalwell 07/08 Gravel 08/06 Hickenlooper 08/15 Inslee 08/21 Moulton 08/23 Gillibrand 08/28.	De Blasio 09/20 Ryan 10/24 O'Rourke 11/01 Messam 11/19 Sestak 12/01 Bullock 12/02 Harris 12/03	Castro 01/02 Williamson 01/10 Booker 01/13 Delaney 01/31	Bennet 02/11 Yang 02/11 Patrick 02/12 Steyer 02/29 Buttigieg 01/01 Klobuchar 03/02	Bloomberg 03/04 Warren 03/05 Gabbard 03/19 Sanders 04/08	Biden

Source: Wikipedia 2021 b.

TABLE 6
Results of the Early Democratic Presidential Nomination Contests in February 2020 (Vote Share and Delegates)

Date and State	Biden		Buttigieg		Klobuchar		Sanders		Warren	
	%	Del.	%	Del.	%	Del.	%	Del.	%	Del.
02/03 Iowa	13.8	6	25.3	**14**	12.4	1	**26.7**	12	20.4	8
02/11 New Hampshire	8.4	-	24.3	**9**	19.7	6	**25.6**	**9**	9.2	-
02/22 Nevada	18.9	9	17.3	3	7.3	-	**40.5**	**24**	11.5	-
02/29 South Carolina	**48.7**	**39**	8.2	-	3.1	-	19.8	15	7.1	-
		54		26		7		**60**		8

Note: Winner in bold.
Source: The Green Papers 2021b.

TABLE 7
Results of Super Tuesday on March 3, 2020 (Vote Share and Delegates)

State	*Biden*		*Bloomberg*		*Sanders*		*Warren*	
	%	Del.	%	Del.	%	Del.	%	Del.
Alabama	**63.6**	**44**	11.7	-	16.5	8	5.7	-
American Samoa	8.8	-	**49.9**	**4**	10.5	-	1.4	-
Arkansas	**40.6**	**17**	16.7	5	22.4	9	10.0	-
California	27.9	172	12.1	7	**36.0**	**225**	13.2	11
Colorado	24.6	21	18.5	9	**37.0**	**29**	17.6	8
Democrats Abroad	22.7	4	2.2	-	**57.9**	**9**	14.3	-
Maine	**33.4**	**11**	11.8	-	32.5	9	15.6	4
Massachusetts	**33.4**	**37**	11.7	-	26.6	30	21.4	24
Minnesota	**38.6**	**38**	8.3	-	29.9	27	15.4	10
North Carolina	**43.0**	**68**	13.0	3	24.2	37	10.5	2
Oklahoma	**38.7**	**21**	13.9	2	25.5	13	13.4	1
Tennessee	**41.7**	**36**	15.5	5	25.0	22	10.4	1
Texas	**34.6**	**113**	14.4	11	29.9	99	11.4	5
Utah	18.4	7	15.4	3	**36.1**	**16**	16.2	3
Vermont	21.9	5	9.4	-	**50.6**	**11**	12.5	-
Virginia	**53.3**	**67**	9.7	-	23.2	31	10.8	1
		661		49		575		70

Note: Winner in bold.
Source: The Green Papers 2021b.

TABLE 8
Results of the Democratic Presidential Nomination Contests from March 3 to April 7, 2020 (Vote Share and Delegates)

Date and State	Biden		Sanders	
	Percent	Delegates	Percent	Delegates
03/10 Idaho	**48.9**	**12**	42.4	8
03/10 Michigan	**52.9**	**73**	36.3	52
03/10 Mississippi	**81.0**	**34**	14.8	2
03/10 Missouri	**60.1**	**44**	34.6	24
03/10 North Dakota	39.5	6	**52.8**	**8**
03/10 Washington	**37.9**	**46**	36.6	43
03/14 Northern Mariana Islands	35.8	2	**62.7**	**4**
03/17 Arizona	**50.0**	**38**	37.4	29
03/17 Florida	**62.0**	**162**	22.8	57
03/17 Illinois	**58.9**	**95**	36.2	60
04/04 Wyoming	**72.2**	**10**	27.8	4
04/07 Wisconsin	**62.9**	**56**	31.7	28
		578		319

Note: Winner in bold.
Source: The Green Papers 2021b.