

# Why Bernie Sanders Matters More Than Donald Trump



It used to be (not so long ago) that when a liberal politician was accused of being a socialist, they'd adamantly reject the notion.

It's easy to understand why. What kind of American leader, after all, would want to be identified with a system that has not only consistently failed throughout history, but also stands in direct opposition to the tenants of *independence* and *liberty* that our great nation was founded on?

In fact, President Obama (arguably the most liberal president in American history) was so rattled by being asked if he was a socialist by a *New York Times* reporter in 2009 that he later personally called the reporter on the phone to emphasize for a second time that he absolutely was not.

In the conversation, the president added, "It was hard for me to believe that you were entirely serious about that socialist question." The president then touted his "free-market principles" to support his case.

Even someone as liberal in his philosophies as President Obama recognized the nasty implications that came with being labeled a socialist. Copping to being a proponent of a system that has bankrupted countries and compelled millions of immigrants to

flee to our country over the decades would have been political suicide.

My how times have changed.

The big political story in this country over the past several weeks has been the rise of Donald Trump to frontrunner status in the Republican presidential primary race. It's easy to understand why the media's paying attention. Trump's not only a larger-than-life celebrity, but also a walking and talking hyperbole machine. He's mocked American prisoners of war for being captured, accused the Mexican government of using our country as a dumping ground for rapists, and reflexively responds to even the mildest criticisms of his conduct with stinging, over-the-top personal attacks.

What the media has failed to point out is the fact that Democratic presidential candidate and proud admitted socialist, Bernie Sanders, is polling **every bit as well** with his party as Trump is with Republican voters. As of the time I'm writing this column, the *Real Clear Politics* national poll average shows less than one percentage point of support separating the two.

Trump is his party's *frontrunner*, in large part, because there are 15 other candidates in the contest, many of whom have similar resumes and similar stances on the issues. That's a *lot* of vote-splitting. If any of them who are currently polling around 5% or more (of which there are seven) suddenly dropped out of the race, the GOP would likely have a new frontrunner overnight.

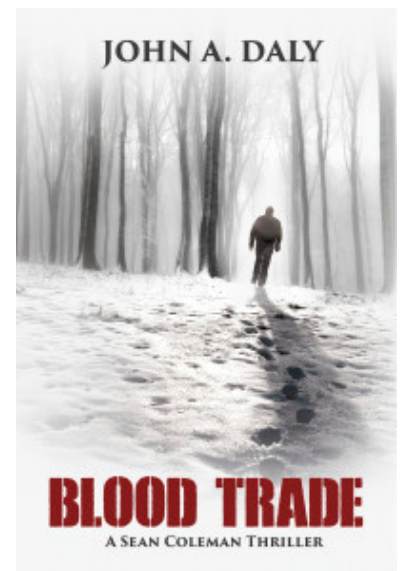
Sanders, on the other hand, has only four competitors. And only one of them is polling at more than 2%: Hillary Clinton, the frontrunner.

More important than these numbers is the fact that Sanders has been setting the narrative for the Democratic presidential platform in this race. In response to Sanders' building

momentum, Hillary Clinton, in a move I predicted back in April, has pulled her campaign rhetoric far to the left in an attempt to glom onto the socialist's resonating messaging. Other than some excessive *War on Women* rhetoric from Clinton, the two are almost indistinguishable now on the campaign trail.

Reading Clinton's and Sanders' Twitter feeds is like watching a one-upsmanship contest of the economically and socially absurd. There are calls for a government-mandated 12-weeks of annual vacation time for workers, jailing people on Wall Street, forced company profit-sharing, crippling tax rates, vast expansions of our entitlement programs, and every other form of anti-capitalism, pro-dependency, class-warfare rhetoric one can dream up.

It's like witnessing a postmortem analysis of the collapse of Greece, but presented in the format of cheery slogans to make it all sound sanctimonious and appealing.



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The media has clearly been presenting Donald Trump's support as proof of how "extreme" the Republican Party has become.

What they don't point out is that many of Trump's less-publicized views are actually more in line with *the* Democratic Party than they are with the GOP. Couple that with the fact that most (if not all) of Trump's Republican competitors (that make up the other 82% of the party's support) have denounced the rhetoric that has made the billionaire a popular candidate, and the narrative crumbles to the ground.

On the other side of the aisle, a socialist (a title fiercely rejected by our very liberal president just six years ago) is now setting the Democratic Party's presidential platform. I'll repeat that: *A **socialist** is now setting the Democratic Party's presidential platform.*

To me, that seems like a major news story. And if someone eventually decides to run with that story, they might want to revisit the question of: Which party is *really* the party of extreme?