

The Democrats had a successful convention. Now watch out for Trump's renewed attacks.



*This week the Democratic Party held their 2020 presidential nominating convention – the first ever to be run almost entirely online due to concerns about COVID-19. In this Q&A, LSE US Centre Director **Professor Peter Trubowitz** comments that the Democratic convention has meant a fundraising boost for the party and is also likely to have inspired their base. Both of these successes, he suggests, will mean that President Trump's attacks on the Democratic nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden, are likely to be even more aggressive at the Republican Party's convention next week.*

Did the Democrats achieve their goals at the convention?

The Democrats needed to do two things: rally the troops and bring in lots of cash to support the rest of the campaign. They accomplished both. The Democratic ticket of former Vice President Joe Biden and California Senator, Kamala Harris might not get much of a bump in the polls, but importantly, given the risks involved in running the first ever online convention, I think they will energize and inspire the base and maintain their lead over Trump/Pence, at least for now. Meanwhile, it is very clear that adding Kamala Harris to the ticket has led donors to open up their wallets. In the two days after Biden announced Harris has his choice for VP, the **Biden campaign raised \$48 million**, \$25.5 million of it in the first day. The Biden campaign previous best single day performance was \$10 million.

What line of attack worked best for the Democrats at the convention?

Attacking Trump's competence. Former First Lady, Michelle Obama began hammering on this theme the first night of the convention and they never let up. This was smart for two reasons: first, competence is **Trump's biggest liability** going into the November election; and second, it is a sure-fire way to get Trump's goat, and it did. My guess is that Trump spent much more time this week responding to Democrats' attacks than meeting with advisors about the pandemic. That only underscored the Democrats' point: he's not showing effective leadership. This won't matter to Trump's loyal supporters, but it just might matter to those **college-educated white suburban voters** who've become frustrated with Trump's shtick.

What should we look for at the Republican convention next week?

Look for a full-throated attack on Biden's fitness to be president. I think it will be less about his age (though there will be that) and more about questioning his "independence" from Democratic constituencies that the Trump campaign is defining as "radical," "socialist," and a threat to law and order. Will this win over voters in the middle? Probably not, but that won't be its main purpose. The Trump campaign is trying to juice its political base and turnout among white blue-collar voters who didn't vote in 2016. They think there are enough of those voters to draw an inside straight a second time.

- *This article is based on interview comments Professor Trubowitz gave to Bloomberg on 21 August.*
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About the author



Peter Trubowitz – *LSE US Centre*

Peter Trubowitz is Professor of International Relations, and Director of the LSE's US Centre. His main research interests are in the fields of international security and comparative foreign policy, with special focus on American grand strategy and foreign policy. He also writes and comments frequently on US party politics and elections and how they shape and are shaped by America's changing place in the world.

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