

OPINION

Socialism Just Bombed



WONDERLAND
By Daniel Henninger

Joe Biden's back-from-the-dead primary wins this week were remarkable, but they aren't the biggest story. Super Tuesday was a wake-up call for this country's understanding of who we are and what we want from our politics and culture.

Before the voting began Tuesday it was conventional wisdom—more like an article of faith—that something called progressivism was on the march in the U.S., sweeping aside decades if not centuries of belief, history and tradition with a new agenda of woke-ness, identity politics and socialism. Its political vessel the past four years has been Sen. Bernie Sanders.

This movement's primary political weapon is not persuasion but intimidation. Starting in the universities and spreading to politics and the private sector, progressivism uses social media platforms to assert: Fall in line with our views or we will isolate and discredit you with moralistic shaming.

It was working. Hark back to the first Democratic presidential debate, in June, when the contestants included the likes of Kamala Harris, Cory Booker, Kirsten Gillibrand and Julián Castro.

It was striking to see these Democratic politicians pay obeisance in varying degrees to woke-ness—to Mr. Sanders's Medicare for All or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New

Deal or the idea that police racism was rampant across the U.S. The high point of Ms. Harris's campaign was her attack on Joe Biden that night for working with segregationist Southern senators in the 1970s: "I do not believe you are a racist," she allowed.

In November, Mr. Booker mocked Mr. Biden for not supporting another woke article of faith—marijuana legalization. "I thought you might have been high when you said it," Mr. Booker laughed. Mr. Biden could have said he understood a lot about the devastations of drug addiction, but he let it pass.

On health care, Mr. Sanders and Sen. Elizabeth Warren dominated the debates and media coverage as they pushed nationalizing the U.S. system, with Mr. Biden left to issue plaintive defenses of "Barack's" Affordable Care Act.

Opinion polls this year had tracked Bernie's inexorable rise and Mr. Biden's decline.

Guess what? The voters still get the last word. It's almost hard to believe anymore. Maybe it's time to stop confusing social media with reality.

Mr. Biden's Super Tuesday upset should be regarded as the voters' second recent pushback against conventional political wisdom. The first, of course, was Donald Trump's win in 2016. Super Tuesday's vote was a victory for moderates, while 2016 was a win for conservatives and dissenters in general. Progressives, however much they dominate the culture, keep losing big, competitive elections.

More primaries lie ahead,

and it isn't obvious Mr. Biden can achieve a delegate majority before the Milwaukee convention. But it's also less obvious where or how Sen. Sanders closes the gap or expands his base. This isn't a Trump redo.

Yes, he prevailed in California, but California became a socialist state years ago.

Hard to believe, but voters still get the last word on what they want from politics.

Its one-party progressivism doesn't have much in common with big primary states to come—Michigan, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Biden's two most notable wins may have been Virginia and Massachusetts, where he handily carried both the moderate black vote and suburbanites. These two groups are starting to look like the Democratic Party's version of taken-for-granted deplorables. When Mr. Sanders rants about the "greed" and "corruption" of industry after American industry, as he did Tuesday night, Democrats of any color who are actually employed by these companies, health insurance and all, may conclude he's talking about them. Socialism can command prime time, but workaday Democrats don't look like they're ready for it.

South Carolina Rep. Jim Clyburn's 11th-hour endorsement of Mr. Biden is rightly seen as an appeal for the Democratic

"establishment"—Bernie's word—to circle the wagons. But what Mr. Clyburn said about the party's progressives is even more noteworthy.

"With all due respect, everybody is talking about 'the Squad this, and the Squad that,'" Mr. Clyburn told the McClatchy news service, referring to the media's elevation of Ms. Ocasio-Cortez and three other first-term House progressives—Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar and Ayanna Pressley. He went on: "There is not a single person who put us in the majority who supports Medicare for All." And he doesn't think the idea will fly with rank-and-file voters: "We would be stupid to say to them, 'the hell with y'all, we're going to go with these four people who didn't flip no seats.'"

One issue unites the entirety of the Democrats' demographic: Defeat Donald Trump. Joe Biden, hardly a commanding presence, is a proxy for Democratic voters' pragmatism and their doubts about Mr. Sanders, socialism and the American left.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, Mr. Trump spent Tuesday night tweeting insults about the party's candidates. "Mini Mike" had caused "the complete destruction of his reputation," and the results were a rare "perfect storm" for "Sleepy Joe." Storm warning is more like it. If the seriousness of purpose and turnout displayed by Democratic voters this Tuesday carries forward to November, we're going to have a drum-tight, closely contested presidential election.

Write henninger@wsj.com.

BOOKSHELF | By Adrian Woolfson

Two Souls In One Body

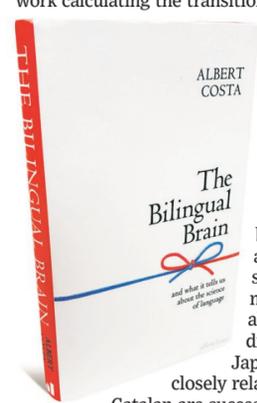
The Bilingual Brain

By Albert Costa

(Allen Lane, 158 pages, \$29.95)

In his dystopian novel "Nineteen Eighty-Four," George Orwell imagined an artificial language, Newspeak, whose restricted grammar and vocabulary were designed to limit the freedom of thought. Although that was clearly an extreme scenario, might those who speak a second language find their thoughts and behavior shaped in some lesser and more benign manner by the words they choose? In his lucid and fascinating book "The Bilingual Brain," Albert Costa forensically explores how different languages coexist within a single human brain, locked into a functional and perpetual—although sometimes awkward and uncomfortable—embrace.

This slim work by Costa, a Barcelona-based expert on the neural basis of language processing who died in 2018, first introduces readers to an apparently indolent and babbling toddler, who it turns out is, even within the first months of its existence, a sophisticated computational machine, hard at work calculating the transitional probabilities between the



archives and lexical structure of its future mental dictionary. Through ingenious means, such as an electronic pacifier able to record sucking behavior and (by proxy) attention levels, Costa transports us into the mind of newborn babies to observe at close hand how they discriminate between languages only hours after their birth. Differences in sucking frequencies show that newly minted human beings are able, for example, to effortlessly differentiate Turkish speech from Japanese. By four months, even closely related languages like Spanish and

Catalan are successfully discriminated.

The fact that researchers can discern bilingualism at an early age indicates that the brains of monolingual and bilingual babies are subject to unique and different patterns of neuronal imprinting. Four-month-old monolingual babies turn to observe a source of sound corresponding to their primary language more rapidly than for an unknown language; bilingual babies, by contrast, do the opposite, turning more quickly when they hear their secondary language. Remarkably, the linguistic programming of an infant's brain precedes birth. Two-day-old babies selectively recognize their mother's voice and show a preference for the language used by her during pregnancy. Babies exposed to two languages during pregnancy, such as English and Tagalog, show no language preference.

Provoked by a question from his mother, who inquired which of her bilingual friend's two languages would be compromised first by her dementia, Costa considers how the languages of bilinguals are physically represented in the brain. Anecdotal accounts of damage following trauma suggest that the two linguistic systems may be stored separately. Costa references Spanish Formula One driver Fernando Alonso, who suffered a concussive accident and was reported—despite his later denial—to have awakened speaking just his second language, Italian.

Despite some evidence to the contrary, Costa argues that this is not the typical pattern. More commonly, the use of both languages is impaired following accidents, strokes and hemorrhages. A similar pattern of loss is observed in diseases such as Alzheimer's: Progressive neurodegenerative changes affect both languages equally. This makes sense, given that brain-imaging studies of bilinguals demonstrate that speaking in either language activates the same brain regions.

A Spanish race-car driver suffered a concussive accident and reportedly woke up speaking just his second language, Italian.

The author believes that the ability of bilinguals to juggle two languages and prevent language-mixing depends on specialized linguistic control mechanisms. Instances of inadvertent language-mixing—such as "slipping" an Italian word into an English conversation—can be investigated using brain-imaging tests. These suggest that the control region may be located in the subcortical region of the left brain hemisphere. Rather than being "turned off" while the dominant language is in use, the secondary language is instead suppressed.

Intriguingly, bilingualism appears to slow the rate of progression of Alzheimer's and can delay the age of dementia onset by up to four years. Nevertheless the benefits of being bilingual may be offset in some individuals by a relative impairment in select areas of linguistic competence. Bilinguals appear to have less efficient access to their lexicon than monolinguals, resulting in more "tip-of-the-tongue" episodes. Bilinguals may also, on average, have smaller vocabularies in both languages. Most provocative, however, is the question of whether bilingualism may modify features of our mental fabric, including those that define our psychology and individuality. Might bilingualism influence our personality, or even our moral systems? Evidence presented by Costa suggests that bilinguals are less egocentric than monolinguals, show more empathy and develop a "theory of mind"—as witnessed by their ability to put themselves in the shoes of others—at an earlier age.

Charlemagne may have been right when he suggested that "knowing another language is like having a second soul." Spanish speakers are more likely to experience heightened emotion when they hear their native "Te quiero" rather than the English equivalent "I love you" or the Italian "Ti amo." In German-English bilinguals tasked with reading appropriately emotional literature, activity in brain regions that are associated with emotional processing can only be observed when they read in their primary language. The use of a second language, Costa concludes, results in more rational and less emotional decision-making. It may also improve decision-making by overcoming risk aversion that tends to reject more beneficial solutions in favor of safer ones.

But the author leaves his most compelling and consequential revelation for last: Our choice of language can affect moral judgment in ways that fundamentally alter our behavior. When faced with the dilemma of whether they would deliberately sacrifice one life to save five, only 17% of Spanish-English bilinguals chose to do so when the dilemma was presented in their dominant language. But in a parallel sample presented with the same problem in English, 40% adopted the more utilitarian option, causing the death of an individual in order to achieve a greater good. Such phenomena may, potentially, have profound social, political and economic implications, especially given the number of global thought leaders who make decisions in secondary languages.

Dr. Woolfson is the author of "Life Without Genes."

Biden May Save the Democrats

By Karl Rove

Americans just witnessed 72 hours unlike any other in the history of presidential primaries.

The miracle began Saturday in South Carolina with Joe Biden's campaign on life support. After horrible wipeouts in Iowa and New Hampshire and a distant second-place finish in Nevada, the former vice president had been written off. But backed by African-American Democrats, Mr. Biden demolished Sen. Bernie Sanders 48% to 20% in the Palmetto State.

Mr. Biden then appeared on Sunday shows to argue that Mr. Sanders's socialist views would drag down the entire Democratic ticket if he were to lead it. The message resonated. By Monday, Sen. Amy Klobuchar and former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg had withdrawn and endorsed Mr. Biden in Dallas, joined by former Rep. Robert Francis O'Rourke.

Then, with virtually no organization, advertising or time to campaign, on Super Tuesday Mr. Biden won at least nine and probably 10 of 14 states, including substantial delegate hauls in Texas, North Carolina, Virginia, Massachusetts and Minnesota. Late-deciding voters went decisively for Mr. Biden, as he converted supporters of candidates who'd withdrawn and some who remained.

It helped that money didn't buy political love for former

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg. His spending could reach \$800 million—and all it won him was American Samoa and third-place finishes in most states. Mr. Bloomberg's campaign counted on Mr. Biden collapsing, but the former vice president rose from the political dead and won the week decisively. Wednesday morning Mr. Bloomberg decided he could do more for his party out of the race than by continuing his campaign, so he folded his campaign and endorsed Mr. Biden.

He needed a miracle, and he got it. But the race against Sanders is far from over.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren may have been Tuesday's biggest loser. She ran third in Massachusetts, her home state, and failed to crack 15% in her native Oklahoma. Sometimes the people who know a politician best dislike her the most.

Though it was Mr. Biden's night, Super Tuesday still had a bright spot for Mr. Sanders. It will take days to finish counting ballots, but Mr. Biden's lead in the delegate count, gained from victories in the South and Midwest, will likely be cut to between 50 and 70 when California's final tally is known. With some 60% of Democratic delegates still to be selected, that isn't a big gap.

The contest is far from over. Mr. Sanders's appeal to Latinos, young people and progressives points to his staying power and a long, drawn-out race. Mr. Biden can't count on momentum alone. While his Tuesday victories will generate more donations, endorsements and volunteers, the leftists backing Mr. Sanders will not go gently. At least the field has shrunk to the two candidates who have a realistic shot of winning.

Mr. Biden invoked a powerful argument when he said Mr. Sanders would hurt down-ballot Democrats. Framing the contest as a question of electability is fine, but it would be more effective if the former vice president pointed out that Mr. Sanders's extreme views and values are not those of ordinary Democrats.

Mr. Sanders is a true socialist, whereas most Democrats support capitalism, albeit with reforms and restraints. A lifelong critic of the U.S., Mr. Sanders has praised anti-American tyrants for decades. An extreme isolationist and ardent protectionist, he'd eviscerate U.S. national security. Mr. Biden needs to take seriously his rival's desire and program to change America's government, economy and culture fundamentally.

This isn't the first time Democrats have faced an attempt by an extremist to hijack their party to transform America. When Franklin D. Roosevelt realized how radical Vice President Henry A. Wallace

was, he allowed party leaders to remove the Iowan from the 1944 Democratic ticket. They replaced Wallace with a Senate backbencher named Harry S. Truman, whose views were in sync with those of Roosevelt and most Democrats.

As president, Truman still had to contend with Wallace's efforts to move the Democratic Party far to the left. In response, the tough Missourian fired Wallace as commerce secretary, then beat him and his followers in every political contest he could, forcing them out of the party and annihilating them in the 1948 election, when Wallace earned 2.4% of the vote as a third-party presidential candidate.

Mr. Sanders represents an existential threat to the Democratic Party. If he "Corbynizes" the party like Labour in Britain, it will be difficult to reverse its leftward lurch anytime soon. While that might be good for the GOP in the short run, it would be dangerous for America, which benefits from a two-party system in which both reject extremist ideologies.

Mr. Biden and other traditional liberal Democrats have a real fight on their hands. Tuesday was its start, not its end. But what an incredible start it was.

Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is author of "The Triumph of William McKinley" (Simon & Schuster, 2015).

China Imprisons a Swedish Bookseller

By Benedict Rogers

The sentencing of bookseller Gui Minhai to 10 years in Chinese prison is another example of the Chinese Communist Party's willingness to trample on the rule of law and thumb its nose at the world. The Chinese-born Mr. Gui is a Swedish citizen, yet China has forced him to renounce his rights as a foreigner. Sweden's diplomats were barred from observing his trial and have been denied consular access.

Mr. Gui is also a Hong Kong resident, but the city's Chief Executive Carrie Lam has washed her hands of him. Three years ago she said it "would not be appropriate" for her to raise his case, or that of others from Hong Kong detained in the mainland, with the Chinese authorities.

Mr. Gui's ordeal began with his apparent kidnapping five years ago in Thailand, where he has a second home. A few

months later he appeared on Chinese state television, "confessing" involvement in a fatal traffic accident that allegedly occurred more than a decade earlier.

Since then he has mostly been held incommunicado in Ningbo, China. He spent two years in prison, and then a few

The treatment of Gui Minhai is a threat to international order.

months in some form of house arrest. Swedish diplomats negotiated his release in 2018, and were with him on a train to Beijing when he was abducted again. Two years later, he has been sentenced, for "illegally providing intelligence" to "overseas" parties—a far cry from a traffic accident.

Why was Mr. Gui targeted? In Hong Kong, he ran a publishing house and bookshop

that sold books about China's top leaders. Some criticized Chinese politics and others were more salacious and gossipy. These books were banned in China, and so people came to buy them in Hong Kong, where they weren't illegal and still technically aren't. Mr. Gui, together with Lam Wing-kee, Lee Bo, Lu Bo and Zhang Zhiping, ran a thriving business in Causeway Bay. The booksellers disappeared, one by one, in 2015, though all except Mr. Gui were eventually released.

Three days after Mr. Gui's sentencing in Ningbo, three key pro-democracy leaders, media mogul Jimmy Lai and former legislators Lee Cheuk-yan and Yeung Sum, were arrested early in the morning by Hong Kong police on spurious charges of participating in "illegal assembly." Unlike Mr. Gui, they were released after a few hours and will appear in court in May with legal representation.

In recent years other foreigners have been detained in

China in cruel and illicit ways for political reasons—British businessman Peter Humphrey, Swedish activist Peter Dahlin, Taiwanese activist Li Ming-che, and Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. But Gui's case reveals that Beijing is prepared to reach across borders, across diplomatic norms and far beyond legal limits to silence critics.

The world's democracies need to wake up to the danger. Sweden has primary responsibility for securing Mr. Gui's release, but its leverage is limited, and the case threatens the whole international world order.

Mr. Rogers is East Asia team leader at the international human-rights organization CSW, co-founder and chairman of Hong Kong Watch, and co-founder and deputy chairman of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission.