

# ***Marginal Gains***

A PolSoc publication

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## ***Lockdown 3:***



**the worst sequel yet ...**



# Johnson's Incompetence

By Soraya Johal

Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, has had a challenging last nine months managing the 66 million people he governs. The coronavirus pandemic has very clearly shown up the skills and capability of both Johnson and his government. Despite these unprecedented times and extremely difficult circumstances, surely Johnson would be able to compose a useful and clear set of rules to help reduce the spread of the virus? Obviously not. In many situations, Johnson has failed to properly protect the country and its citizens, which is the first and most important duty of any Prime Minister.

Johnson's own personal views and loyalties have clearly overshadowed his decisions, which have inadvertently, or some may say incompetently, lead to greater deaths from the virus. As the virus was spreading around the world in early 2020 and many Asian countries were locking down, Johnson's views of liberty and freedom appeared to overshadow his first priority to protect the citizens of the UK through his dithering over locking down the

I WILL IMPOSE AS MANY *LOCAL* LOCKDOWNS AS IT TAKES TO AVOID ANOTHER DISASTROUS NATIONAL LOCKDOWN



country.

His misplaced loyalty to his chief adviser, Dominic Cummings, over the now infamous Cummings-gate trip to Durham to test his eyesight, created mistrust and confusion across the country. How should the public be expected to follow rules, when one of the Prime Minister's most trusted workers can't?

Australia, New Zealand, and even the city this virus was thought to have been created in, Wuhan, were able to

celebrate New Year's Eve with thousands in attendance. In comparison, Johnson was floundering with his Tier System, which was easily manipulated and failed to slow the spread of the virus.

Johnson's incompetence in his approach to managing the virus has now led to a third national lockdown. Johnson again was too slow to close the UK borders when a new variant of the virus was first detected in the UK back in September which has meant that countries have now taken the decision to close their borders to us! An unwanted country, newly outside the EU, with disruptions to trade and rocketing numbers of Covid cases and deaths, are evidence of Johnson's failure, and not surprisingly opinion polls suggest that if an election were held today, he would lose.

BIG BOZZA IS WATCHING YOU

YOU CAN MIX OUTSIDE...

OR MAYBE YOU CAN'T...

ER... MMM... NEED TO CHECK THAT



# Yeah but no but yeah ...

By Imogen Crawford



**Boris Johnson**  @BorisJohnson · Jan 2, 2020

This is going to be a fantastic year for Britain.



12K

63K

70.3K



**Boris Johnson**  @BorisJohnson · 31 Dec 2020

There will be plenty who will be only too happy to say goodbye to the grimness of 2020.

But this was also the year when we rediscovered a spirit of togetherness, of community.

In 2021 we have our freedom in our hands and it is up to us to make the most of it. Happy New Year!

 Pinned Tweet



**Boris Johnson**  @BorisJohnson · 4 Jan

Stay at home. Protect the NHS. Save lives.



9.3K

5.3K

17.2K





# The Virus of Misinformation



By Olivia Whitworth

A simple search on social media giants, such as Facebook, can locate hundreds of thousands of users that promote the avoidance of vaccination. Similar concerning figures can also be seen on newer media platforms, like Tiktok, with the hashtag #vaccinesaredangerous gaining over 800,000 views. Many believe that stricter measures on social media platforms are the best way to combat misinformation being spread.

Labour's shadow ministers have urged the Government to place financial and criminal penalties on social media companies that fail to monitor and censor content that advocates for anti-vaccination. Digital Secretary, MP Oliver Dowden, responded to this with a short clip stating the Government's steps in tackling misinformation. He firstly stated that Public Health England

would spend 'tens of millions of pounds explaining to people why the vaccine is safe' and they planned to 'work with social media sites' to block disinformation within 48 hours of it being posted. Four days later, a press release was issued on GOV.UK which listed their terms, with platforms facing fines up to 10% of turn over or blocking of their sites if inappropriate content wasn't restricted. It also mentioned that freedom of speech would be protected through allowing people to express their views through comment sections.

But the danger is that this could spark indignation in people that oppose vaccinations, and ultimately prove counter-productive towards the Government and their attempt to educate the public.





# Should we have to take a test before we can vote?



By Freddie Truman

'I voted Brexit because the EU do nothing for our economy': Common misconceptions, hyperboles and just plain untruths are flippantly tossed around at the height of elections and referendums. Nowadays, many people are taken in by outdated, poorly evidenced claims that manipulate their vote: they then complain of political disaster when the true side effects of their beliefs come to fruition. Therefore, a basic political awareness test would resolve this very real threat to our democracy.

Firstly, it is important that this is not an IQ or intelligence test: this would be a purely classist and unfair mechanism to disenfranchise poorer voters who may have had fewer educational opportunities than their better off counterparts.

Instead, an unbiased multiple choice test (scrutinized by a multi-party and expert committee) set around party manifestos, current events, and key political figures would set the foundations for an informed vote. In addition, implementing courses in schools and online would allow a streamlined transition into this system.

It is important to recognise that

voting is not a right, it is a privilege: one can only vote after turning 18, and registering to do so register; it can be equally taken away if you commit a crime.

Many will argue that this is against democracy as it would involve a so called 'right' being taken away and selectively offered to those who pass the test: this claim is untrue and, furthermore, quite hypocritical considering the fact that children (quite rightly) currently do not have the privilege to vote. The reasoning behind this, being their inexperience and lack of understanding, could be

equally applied to those who vote based off myopic, outdated, and biased information.

Therefore, an awareness test would not be classist, undemocratic, inhumane, or any sort of punishment, but rather an incentive to create an overall more informed society that makes decisions for their needs. It neither restricts the vote entirely, nor does it allow the continued development of a disengaged public: it would hugely benefit UK politics and democracy.

## Quotes about democracy

'The best argument against democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter.'

**Winton Churchill**

'The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all'.

**John F. Kennedy**

'Democracy is a pathetic belief in the collective wisdom of individual ignorance.'

**H.L. Mencken**



# Generation Z plays dirty

By Alexandra Warburton

Politics gets dirty - but not always in the way that one would think. 'Dirty politics' conjures up images of sex-scandals, whisper campaigns and push polling all of which are usually carried out by people with party links and affiliations, but 2020 has shown us a new generation of dirty players.

Over the course of the US election campaign, Trump's staff organised a series of rallies and, naturally, Gen Z took to TikTok to voice their interest. Countless viral videos circulated encouraging others to buy tickets for Trump rallies and then to 'forget' to turn up, leaving their seats empty. This side of TikTok claims to have registered near 1 million tickets as a prank and argues that it resulted in several of the 'sold out' rallies only being filled at less than a third of their potential capacity. This embarrassment was even more humiliating for the Trump campaign as they had released extra tickets and employed extra security due to the apparent oversubscription. Worldwide, teenagers and young



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
@AOC

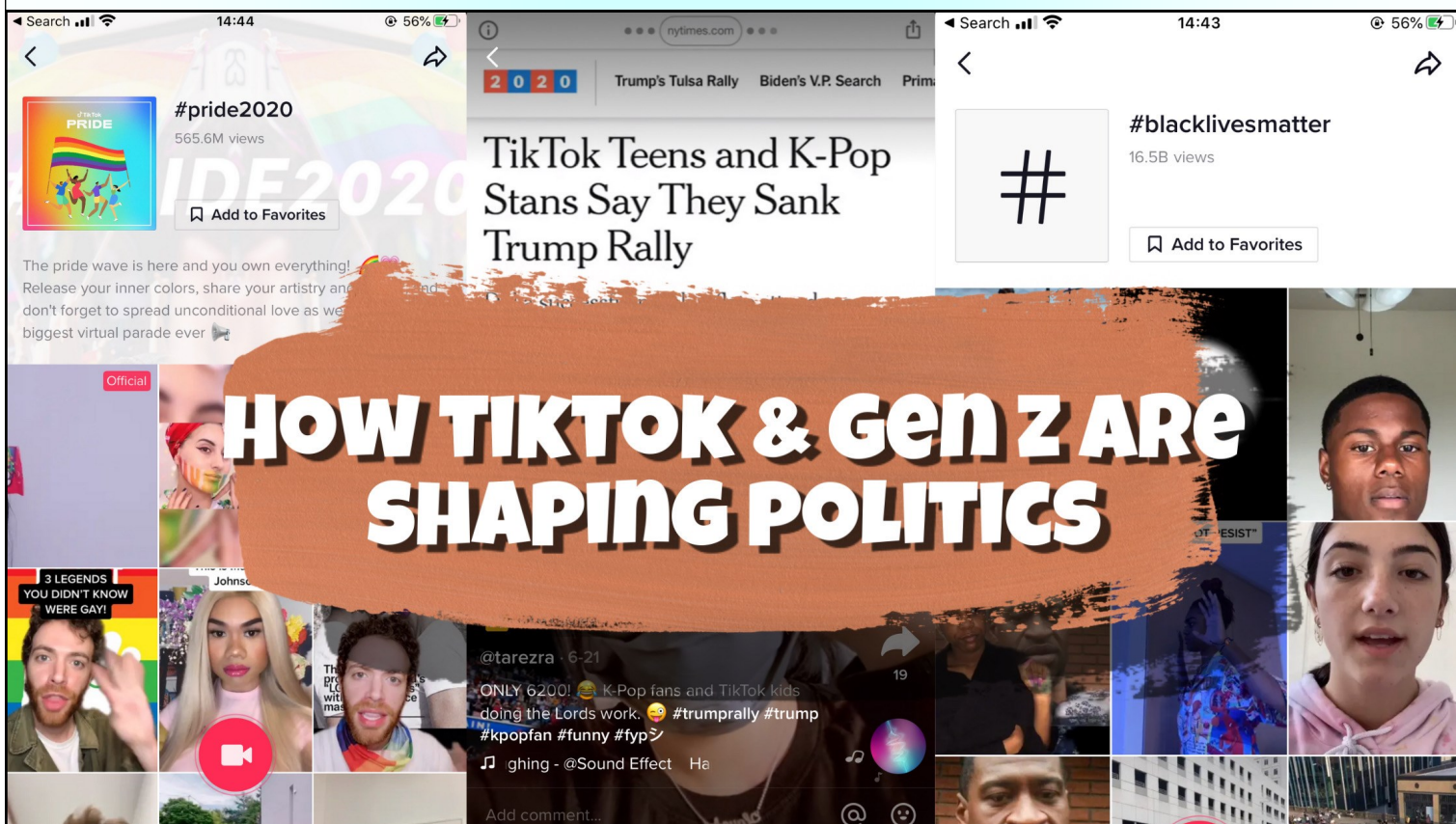
Actually you just got ROCKED by teens on TikTok who flooded the Trump campaign w/ fake ticket reservations & tricked you into believing a million people wanted your white supremacist open mic enough to pack an arena during COVID

Shout out to Zoomers. Y'all make me so proud. 😊

adults are participating politically in an election that many of them have no right to vote in: is this undermining US democracy?

Some US Democrats were quick to respond to allegations of this being the work of 'radical protestors' with New York Representative Alexandria Occasio Cortez tweeting 'actually, you just got ROCKED by teens on TikTok'. The teens themselves were also keen to comment with one noting: 'I want people to understand that if you vote for Trump, you're leading this country into a downward spiral.'

They argue that this is an exciting new way of expressing political discontent and encouraging participation in young people therefore having more voices heard. But if these smear tactics become regularly employed in the next election, and the Republicans follow suit, political rallies for both parties will become an increasingly futile endeavour and elections increasingly more difficult to read as the voters themselves begin to manipulate campaign statistics through co-ordinated attacks on campaign-organised events.





# Reflections on the US Election

By Emily Baker

November 3 2020 will go down as a historic day in American politics: Joe Biden has won more votes than any other president in history, and Kamala Harris is the first African American, first Asian American and first woman ever elected to be vice president.

Yet, there still seem to be a few more dreaded years ahead for Democrats. Trump has divided America, managing to gain the most votes of any Republican candidate and has gained a strong group of core supporters. The election was most certainly won by what Biden was not rather than what he would do. There have been significant losses in the House of Representatives for Democrats, with it on track to have the thinnest majority in two decades. With a divided Congress it seems nearly impossible that Biden is going to be able to properly legislate and tackle issues of health care, climate change and immigration. It seems that the result of the election was not a triumph of the Democrats but simply a vote to return to political

normalcy once again. While Donald Trump won the White House due to not being a traditional politician, Biden has won because he is.

While president, Trump has told thousands of lies, and never seemed to lose popularity from his core support despite racist rants, calling Mexican's rapists, incestuous comments about his daughter and fat shaming women. Internationally, he berated the USA's democratic allies, while applauding the horrific dictatorships of North Korea and Russia. He has ignored scientific advice, both about climate change and Covid-19, and was impeached due to seeking help from Ukraine to boost his chances of re-election. Trump is the first modern president whose approval rating never went above 50%.



At the end of the day, Biden is a career politician and while Biden may not have been elected for his policies that he is going to enact, at least the US will have a president that cares about politics, rather than one that dismisses sexual harassment victims by claiming they're too ugly and fails to denounce white supremacy. Perhaps the greatest achievement Biden could make is reuniting America and unravelling the deep-seated divides in American politics.

By Katy Scott

Despite Florida suffering some of the worst consequences of climate change within the US, their electorate voted for a candidate who refuses to believe in the issue. 51.2% voted for Trump with Latin Americans, in particular Cuban Americans, being influential in this result.

Unlike Biden, who promised to restore diplomatic relations, Trump stuck to his hard-line stance on Cuba. Biden argued that 'failing to recognise them at all is different to sanctioning them', moving back towards diplomatic relations while still imposing sanctions. Trump's continued hard-line stance aimed to enhance compliance with the US laws, hold the Cuban regime

accountable for human rights abuses ignored by Obama, and lay the groundwork for the Cuban people to gain liberty. This was popular among Cuban-Americans who are strongly opposed to the actions of Cuba.

Trump's inability to take the COVID pandemic seriously, which disproportionately affects Latinos, and the impressive body of insults and racial slurs he has built up towards their community, did not turn away the Latino voter. Rather, Trump's lower taxation, free-market capitalist policies won support in the Cuban community. Trump aimed to capitalise on the Cuban and Venezuelan fear of returning to an oppressive socialist regime through tweeting 'Joe Biden is a PUPPET of

CASTRO-CHAVISTAS... Biden is weak on socialism. I will stand with you!' just a month before the election. Biden was unable to shake this 'socialist' tag due to his weak outreach into the Latino community, where arguably more than a song by Spanish artist Bad Bunny in a YouTube campaign commercial was needed. Biden's campaign was criticised by Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, Democratic Representative of New York's 14<sup>th</sup> District, on election night, with the belief Biden did not do enough to capture the Latino vote. It was Biden's ignorance of the Democratic vulnerability from the Latino vote and Trump's strong stance against Cuba that swung Florida Republican in the 2020.

# Biden's Long Political Journey

By Amy Wood

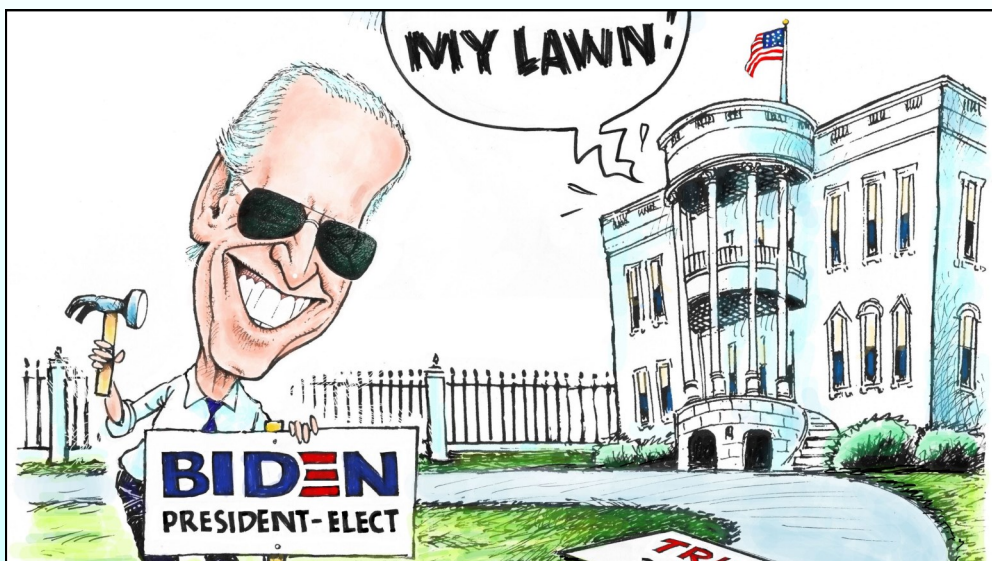
Joe Biden has had an impressive political career spanning 40 years. In 1973 he won a Senate seat for Delaware and retained it for 36 years. He was also chair of the Foreign Relations Committee and served as Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee from 1987-1995. Biden has also run for Presidential Office 3 times, including his successful campaign in the 2020 election.

One thing Biden has been most passionate about throughout his career is Foreign Policy, although his opinions have not always been consistent. During his 2<sup>nd</sup> political campaign for the presidency in 2008, he called the Iraq war 'the biggest foreign policy blunder in America's history'. This was despite his initial stance when voting in favour of sending troops into Iraq in 2002. He later proposed that Congress repeal its authorisation of the use of force in Iraq, which would have effectively ended the war.

During the 2020 election campaign, Biden strongly supported the Affordable Care Act from the Obama administration and advocated adding a 'public option' to 'Medicare for all' meaning there is the option to choose to keep your own private health care plan.

Climate Change is also a long-standing topic of Biden's politics. In 1986 he introduced the 'Global Climate Protection Act' which directs the President to establish a task force to research, develop, and implement a coordinated national strategy on the global climate, and in the 2020 election, Biden put forward a plan to achieve net-zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050.

In both his 2008 and 2020 election campaigns, he has shown more moderate economic views than his fellow democrats. Whilst not



believing in 'punishing the rich' with exorbitant tax rates, he believes that everyone should pay their fair share and he plans to repeal Trump's 2017 corporate tax cuts.

Due to the nature of having a long-term career, he has changed and adapted his views on many issues. Biden is an older and more conservative Democrat, demonstrated by the fact that he used to support Pro-Life legislation which barred federal funding for abortions. He has since rescinded his support for this in 2019. He also opposed same-sex marriage in the 1990s, voted for the Defence of Marriage Act in 1996 and the 'Don't

Ask Don't tell' policy. Again, he has appeared to change his viewpoint publicly and in May 2012 he did a television interview where he endorsed gay marriage, being the highest ranking Democrat to do so at the time, and his record on supporting the LGBTQ+ community has since been strong.

Joe Biden has been a key figure in American Politics for some time now but his views have not always been consistent. It will be interesting to see what further changes he will make in his presidency and the impact this will have on America and the rest of the world.





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## Have your say ..

- Marginal Gains welcomes contributions from all members of the school community. If you are interested in contributing join the Marginal Gains Team for more information.

## In the next issue:

- The attack on the Capitol
- The Georgia Senate Elections
- Biden's inauguration
- The impact of Brexit
- Lockdown 3
- and much more!

