

The Democrats Plan for Ukraine Is: They Don't Have a Plan

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Amid the Democratic National Convention (DNC), Kamala Harris has pledged to “stand strong with Ukraine and our NATO allies.” With the upcoming US presidential elections, all eyes are on the Democratic nominee Kamala Harris and on the Republican one Donald Trump. If one is to believe the (overwhelmingly pro-Ukrainian) Western press, the Republic candidate will just “abandon” Ukraine altogether thus ensuring its defeat, while the Democrats in turn will do everything they can to “save” the Eastern European country. Things are quite more complex than that, of course.

Firstly, and it is always important to highlight that, the US-led West bears, at the very least, a large part of responsibility for the ongoing crisis in Ukraine since 2014 – arguably [most of it](#).

Secondly, Trump is no “pro-Russia agent” at all – and [no “peacemaker”](#) either.

And now to the Democrats. Starting with Kamala Harris, she famously described the conflict in Ukraine as

“Ukraine is a country in Europe. It exists next to another country called Russia. Russia is a bigger country. Russia is a powerful country. Russia decided to invade a smaller country called Ukraine. So basically that’s wrong.”

Beyond this fourth-grade vocabulary utterance, Harris does not have much to offer on the issue, and on any other issue, for that matter. If the incumbent President Joe Biden no longer has had a clear picture of anything due to a senile dementia related condition (which the White House administration [conspired to cover up](#)), Harris in turn seems to similarly have no clear picture about most topics – for whatever reason.

Of course, Harris’ much mocked remarks on Ukraine, made in 2022, shortly after the current Russian military campaign began, were her way of [responding](#) (a little too literally) to a radio show host guest request to break it down “in layman’s terms”. Be it in layman’s terms or not, she has had not much to say on the matter beyond the usual clichés. With a plethora of her inscrutable aphorisms going viral, much has been made of the Democrat’s nominee [logorrhoea](#) (which could indeed be a sign of psychological and neurological disorders, according to [experts](#)), but the deeper issue is that the Democrat party itself does not seem to have a plan.

Emma Ashford (senior fellow with the Reimagining U.S. Grand Strategy program at the Stimson Center), and Matthew Kroenig (senior director of the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft

Center for Strategy and Security) have both recently [questioned](#) whether Harris has a foreign policy at all. To be honest, the Democratic Party 2024 policy platform does seem to [pivot back to Europe](#) (and partially away from the [Pacific](#) trend started by [Hillary Clinton](#)), but does not offer much more concrete clues beyond that.

As I [wrote](#) before, Washington's foreign policy often reminds one of the swing of a pendulum. More often than not, it oscillates between the notion of "countering" either Russia or China – sometimes attempting to accomplish both things at the same time, as we have seen with Joe Biden's dangerous "[dual containment](#)" approach.

One thing we can infer from the Democrats platform is that they want to exert much pressure on Russia without engaging in talks and without worrying that much about their own transatlantic allies (we've all seen how post-Nord Stream is going, energy-wise). This is no recipe for any kind of peace.

Stephen M. Walt (a Renée Belfer professor of international relations at Harvard University) says that focusing excessively on official presidential platforms is a misplaced endeavor, arguing instead that, on foreign policy, when it comes to key decisions, the real power lies with "a small inner circle of aides and appointees." Walt remarks on how the [Republican platform](#) is "vague to the point of uselessness", while the [Democratic one](#), albeit "long, earnest, wonkish, and kind of boring", "doesn't tell you all that much about what Harris will do if she's elected."

I've written before on the topic of the "secret government", as the Boston Globe [called](#) it in 2014. Michael J. Glennon, international law scholar, calls it a "[double government](#)", with an almost self-governing national security and defense apparatus operating without much accountability. John Kerry famously stated that much of it just runs "on auto-pilot". In any case, one should not take the notion too literally. A strong President, for good or bad, can obviously leave his or her imprint on the course of foreign policy – up to a certain extent, at least.

However, the declining American empire has been short of such strong leaders, to the point of it even being unclear [who currently governs or has governed the country](#) for the last couple of years. And the global environment today is quite challenging. American Foreign policy on the auto-pilot (if that has been the case) gave us an unbalanced US-funded state of Israel committing genocide and [setting the Middle East ablaze](#), a [crisis in the Red Sea](#) (which is a spill-off of the latter), [unprecedented rising frictions with China](#) over the issue of Taiwan and, of course, a disastrous unwinnable war in Eastern Europe. Simply put, a [declining](#) overstretched superpower is scary enough – but an [overburdened](#) superpower with no plan is nightmarish.

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