

Zelenskyy Joins the US Election

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Global Research, September 27, 2024

Region: [Europe, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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Here he goes again, cap in hand, begging for the alms of war. Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been touring the United States, continuing his lengthy salesmanship for Ukraine's ongoing military efforts against Russia. The theme is familiar and constantly reiterated: the United States must continue to back Kyiv in its rearguard action for civilisation in the face of Russian barbarism. By attempting, not always convincingly, to universalise his country's plight, Zelenskyy hopes to keep some lustre on an increasingly fading project.

The Ukrainian president has succeeded most brazenly in getting himself, and the war effort, into the innards of the US presidential election. In doing so, he has become an unabashed campaigner for the Democrats and the Kamala Harris ticket while [offering uncharitable views](#) about the Republicans. (Electoral interference, anyone?) The Republican contender, Donald Trump, had good reason to [make the following observation](#) about Zelenskyy: "Every time he comes into the country he walks away with \$60 billion ... he wants them [the Democrats] to win this election so badly."

Even as a lame duck president, Joe Biden could still be wooed to advance another aid package. This seemed to be done, as the White House [records](#), on threadbare details about Zelenskyy's "plan to achieve victory over Russia." According to the readout, diplomatic, economic and military aspects of the plan were discussed. "President Biden is determined to provide Ukraine with the support it needs to win."

Detail was also scarce [in a briefing](#) given by White House national security spokesperson John Kirby. Zelenskyy's plan to end the war "contains a series of initiatives and steps and objectives that [he] believes will be important".

In a [statement](#), Biden announced that he had directed the Department of Defense to allocate the rest of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative funds by the end of the year along with US\$5.5 billion in Presidential Drawdown Authority. The US\$2.4 billion from the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative is intended to supply Ukraine "with additional air defense, Unmanned Aerial Systems, and air-to-ground ammunitions, as well as strengthen Ukraine's defense industrial base and support its maintenance and sustainment requirements."

In terms of materiel, an additional Patriot air defence battery is to be furnished to Ukraine's air defences, along with additional Patriot missiles. Training for Ukrainian F-16 pilots is to be expanded. The air-to-ground Joint Standoff Weapon (JSOW), colloquially known as glide bombs, will also be supplied.

Ukraine's fate is being annexed to the US election campaign, with the Ukrainian president keen to make his own boisterous intervention in the election. On September 22, Zelenskyy paid a visit to a military facility in Scranton, Pennsylvania. It was calculated for maximum effect. The facility is not only responsible for manufacturing some of the equipment being used in the war against Russia, notably 155-millimeter howitzer rounds, but is a crucial state for the presidential contenders. On hand to join him was a full coterie of Democrats: Gov. Josh Shapiro, Senator Bob Casey (D-Pa.) and Representative Matt Cartwright (D-8th District)

Harris is clear that any administration she leads will see no deviation from current policy. Peace proposals were to be scoffed at, while prospects for a Ukrainian victory had to be seriously entertained. Stopping shy of playing the treason card in [remarks](#) made on September 26, Harris claimed that there were those "in my country who would instead force Ukraine to give up large parts of its sovereign territory, who would demand that Ukraine accept neutrality, and would require Ukraine to forgo security relationships with other nations." And such types had endorsed "proposals" identical to "those of [Russian President Vladimir] Putin."

That message of sanctimonious chest beating [was also embraced](#) by Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-Md.), who could only see Zelenskyy as a fighter "for freedom and the rule of law on behalf of democracies around the world" while "Trump and his craven MAGA followers side time and again with Vladimir Putin," one responsible for a "filthy imperialist and irredentist invasion." Clearly, the Zelenskyy promotions tour has exercised some wizardry.

The full soldering of Ukrainian matters to the US electoral politics has received a frosty response from various Republicans. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) [demanded](#) nothing less than Zelenskyy's dismissal of the Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova. "Ambassador Markarova organised an event in which you toured an American manufacturing site." The tour took place "in a politically contested battleground state, was led by a top political surrogate for Kamala Harris, and failed to include a single Republican because - on purpose - no Republicans were invited."

Those on the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, seething at Zelenskyy's electoral caper, have [launched an investigation](#) into the possibility that taxpayer funds had been misused to the benefit of the Harris presidential campaign. Chairman James Comer (R-Ky.), in a [letter](#) to Attorney General Merrick B. Garland, noted that, as the Department of Justice was "highly focused on combatting electoral interference, the Committee requests DOJ review the Biden-Harris Administration's coordination with the Ukrainian government regarding President Zelensky's itinerary while in America."

Comer could not resist a pertinent reminder that the Democrats had made much the same charge against Trump while in office in 2019. That occasion also featured Zelenskyy, only that time, the accusation was that Trump had used him "to benefit his 2020 presidential campaign, despite a lack of any evidence of wrongdoing on the part of President Trump."

GOP dissatisfaction is far from unreasonable. Zelenskyy's sojourn is nothing less than a sustained effort at electoral meddling, the sort of thing that normally turns US exceptionalists into rabid hyenas complaining of virtue despoiled. Only this time, there are politicians and officials in freedom's land happy to tolerate and even endorse it. At stake is a war to prolong.

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