

## Who Is Kamala Harris and What Does She Stand For?

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We are weeks away from the seminal U.S. election which will determine if the U.S. opts for a counterrevolutionary white, Christian nationalist, and plutocratic dictatorship or a compromised version of social democracy. After the month-long torment of the nation twisting in the wind as President Biden resisted pressures to step aside following his disastrous debate performance, the torch of leadership of the Democratic Party has been passed to Vice President Kamala Harris.

Underlining the stakes of the election, More than 200 Republican former staffers for either former President George W. Bush, Sen. Mitt Romney, or Sen. John McCain have endorsed Harris saying “Of course, we have plenty of honest, ideological disagreements with Vice President Harris and Gov. Walz. That’s to be expected. The alternative, however, is simply untenable.”

Between Biden’s withdrawal and election day, there has been little time for either the Democratic Party or Donald Trump to define Harris. As the *New York Times* reported, “Harris does not have a policy page on her campaign website...[she] has been running mainly on Democratic good feelings.” More defining than the vague insistence of “FREEDOM” at the Democratic Party’s convention were the impassioned chants of “Not Going Back!,” or forward, to Trumpian racism, assaults on democracy and climate, or the romances with Putin and Kim Jung-Un.

Despite having served as a senator and vice president, Harris remains a largely unknown quantity. During the Democratic Party’s August convention, she was reintroduced as a caring, competent, and tough minded happy warrior and source of hope.” But little is to be learned from what was the Biden-Harris 2024 Democratic Party Platform. Written in anticipation of President Biden’s campaign for reelection, it reads as a defense of Biden’s presidency covering no new ground. Anxious to maintain as much ambiguity and freedom of action as possible, the Harris campaign opted not to make updating the platform a priority. And, although her party’s vacuous platform allocated nearly twenty pages to “Strengthening American Leadership Worldwide” its fleeting and ritual adoption didn’t disturb the convention’s feel good vibes with any references to

competition with China for hegemony, military alliances, or “modernization” of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and its delivery systems.

During the convention, Cleve Wootson, Jr. of the *Washington Post* wrote an illuminating story about the reinvention of Kamala Harris. He explained in 2020 Harris was uncomfortable campaigning in primaries as the party was moving to the left, and that she endured a “harrowing” first year as Vice President when she was poorly supported and isolated by the administration’s senior leadership. That changed when the administration moved to change her image. With support from Biden, she “began focusing less on perilous political tasks like tackling the cause of immigration and seized instead of issues such as abortion and racism, which played to her rhetorical strengths. And, as we saw in Harris’ acceptance speech and given the framing of the election as being between a prosecutor and a felon, expect Harris to campaign most comfortably on issues of criminal justice.

After blessings from the Obamas, for whom she campaigned during the 2008 primary campaign, she brings the excitement of African American and South Asian accents to her campaigning, signaling support for greater social and economic justice, while committing to history’s most powerful military force, including military alliances, and harping on inflated Russian and Chinese threats. ”

Worth noting was the scholar Peter Beinert’s observation that there was a false and potentially crippling ring to the convention’s central theme of FREEDOM. Israeli and Jewish pain were legitimately placed on prime time display with the speech by the parents of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, an American who was wounded and taken hostage in Hamas’ despicable October 7 massacre. But amidst protests over the failure of the Biden administration to exercise the leverage it has over Israel to force a cease first, the Harris-Walz camp refused to similarly humanize and display Palestinian pain amidst Israel’s genocidal war against Gazans. That. Beinart noted, gave lie to the Party’s commitments to equality and could cost it votes in this critically important election.

Not to be forgotten, the shadow of Trump’s January 6, 2020, failed coup and the danger of the Gaza War becoming a region-wide configuration, hangs over the election. We cannot assume election fairness. Trump’s election deniers are again in position to certify false election results. Cadres of attorneys have been lined up to dispute or defend election returns. Should he lose, Trump predicts a “blood bath,” with the possibility of another attempted *coup d’état*.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu has been murderously doing all that he can to entice Iran into triggering a catastrophic regional war with its tectonic impacts on the U.S. election.

## **THE BIDEN TRUMP CONTEXT**

For the past year it has been apparent that the only way to prevent a Trump dictatorship is to prevent his return to the White House. With the Supreme Court now fully controlled by extreme right-wing, racist, and fascist operatives who on July 1st granted presidents near-total immunity from prosecution, it has been clear that our constitutional guardrails are insufficient to contain Donald Trump and the counterrevolutionary MAGA movement. Despite his historic legislative successes in rebooting the U.S. economy, the obvious decline of Biden's physical and intellectual facilities, generated severe doubts among many Democrats that President Biden could prevent a Trump/MAGA political tsunami. Only Dean Philipps, a little known Democratic Congressman had the gumption to state that the emperor had no clothes and to, Don Quixote-like, challenge him in primary elections. Many hoped and did what little they could to encourage the Democratic Establishment to intervene and replace him as the Party's candidate while celebrating Biden's undeniable economic and social policy accomplishments.

That didn't happen.

Despite our movements' challenges to Biden's embrace of Netanyahu amidst the Gaza genocide, his refusal to force a ceasefire in Ukraine and negotiations with Russia for a neutral and secure Ukraine and ratcheting up of the military and economic confrontations with China, a Biden election victory was seen as the desperately needed compromise to avoid a Trump dictatorship. In a period reminiscent of Germany in the 1930s, Trump's promises to punish his political opponents, his pledge to deport up to 20 million immigrants which would require creation of a police state, and his Project 2025 developed by the right-wing Heritage Foundation provide the roadmaps for an end to constitutional democracy and the imposition of a racist and plutocratic dictatorship.

Thus, it was with a mixture of foreboding and a modicum of hope, that many tuned into the June 27 televised Biden-Trump debate.

The worst fears were confirmed in the first minutes of the debate. Age had obviously taken its toll. Biden repeatedly lost his train of thought, and his stammering and fading voice generated immediate despair. Trump's dictatorship, and all that it implies, appeared inevitable.

Fortunately, that despair triggered the revolt within the Party Establishment, in the liberal press, among major donors, and beyond all of whom had been missing during the primary season. The campaign by Nancy Pelosi, the Obamas, and Congressional leaders to force Biden to retire was on.

As the political coup progressed, there was talk of an expedited primary election to identify Biden's successor and to use the primary to build loyalty and excitement for the substitute candidate. That was not to be. Harris, then best known for failing to stem the flow of immigrants from the Global South and for her sputtering 2020 presidential primary campaign, quickly consolidated her hold on the nomination and generated unanticipated excitement and momentum in the Democratic Party's base..

### **HARRIS' ASCENT**

On the eve of the Democratic Party's mid-August convention the *New York Times* reported that "the vice president remains largely undefined." Despite her and the Party's efforts to reintroduce her as forward thinking in comparison to Trump's obsessions and commitments to a mythic past, with vague tweaks to Biden's economic policies. Harris 'is not offering sweeping change in policy. As the *Times* later reported, she is at heart an institutionalist...focused on granular impacts over broad society shifts." She represents continuity of the Biden administration in the tradition of the Clinton-Obama neoliberal trajectory. In terms of foreign and military policies, her refusal to oppose massive new weapons shipments to Israel in the face of the Gaza genocide appears to give much of the game away. She will do what she can to maintain U.S.-led liberal internationalist hegemony.

Kamala Harris was born in 1964 to Donald J. Harris, an economics doctoral student from Jamaica and Shyamala Gopalan, who at age nineteen came to the University of California in Berkeley from India to study nutrition and endocrinology. Contrary to Donald Trump's calumny that Kamala only recently "turn[ed] Black" for political purposes, she is, like many Americans, multiracial and multicultural. At the University of California, her parents were described as a "power couple" in the school's civil rights movement, her father being Black and her mother welcomed as a person of color. Donald and Shyamala wed in 1963 and divorced in 1972. Kamala and her younger sister Maya were raised primarily by their single, gritty, and loving mother, who continued her close ties to her family in India. Kamala visited her father on weekends.

Harris studied political science and economics at Howard, the elite historically Black university in Washington, D.C., graduating in 1986. There she was on the debate team and, signaling her political ambitions, was elected to the student council. From Howard, she returned to California, where she earned her law degree at the University of California's premier Boalt Law School in 1989. The following year, she became Deputy District Attorney in Oakland, California, near San Francisco, and from 1990 to 1998 developed "a reputation for toughness as she prosecuted cases of gang violence, drug trafficking, and sexual abuse." She became district attorney in 1998. In 2010 she narrowly won election as the state's Attorney General becoming the first woman, African American and South Asian to hold that office. As Attorney General, she won a signal court battle with state banks over unfair practices in which she won roughly \$20 billion in mortgage relief for homeowners. Her refusal to defend Proposition 8 which banned same sex marriage in California led to that law being overturned.

Harris, who had campaigned for Obama in Iowa during the 2008 presidential primary, became a nationally influential political figure when she was invited to speak in the 2012 Democratic National Convention. Recognized as a "rising star" she was elected to the Senate in 2016. There she served on the Select Committee on Intelligence, on the Judiciary Committee, and joined the Congressional Black Caucus. She gained national attention for her "prosecutorial" style in questioning witnesses, especially Senator Jeff Sessions, a close Trump ally, during investigations of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. She ran unsuccessfully in the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, during which her most stunning moment came when she questioned Biden's associations with segregationists and his early opposition to bussing to desegregate the nation's schools. She was, she said, "that little girl [on the bus] was me."

Harris failed in 2020 due to uninspired campaigning and criticisms that as California Attorney General she failed to investigate police misconduct, including police shootings. Those criticisms fell aside after she became a leading advocate of reform after the brutal police murder of George Floyd that triggered massive and sometimes violent nationwide protests and demands for change

In the wake of the powerful Black Lives Matter protests, Joe Biden recognized his need to choose a Black woman as his vice presidential running mate if he was to win the critical support of Black women voters. Kamala was recruited, and as the first woman of color to become vice-president. After the Supreme Court's antediluvian ruling on abortion, Harris

became the administration's leading advocate of women's and reproductive rights. She was also tasked with addressing the forces fueling migration from Mexico, protecting voting rights being undermined by racist Republican forces, and in her role as a serious Washington insider, she set the record for the most tie-breaking votes in the Senate by a Vice President.

### **THE HARRIS-WALZ ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY AGENDA**

Not since the Vietnam War have foreign and military factors been determinative in the outcome of U.S. national elections. True, deep schisms in the Democratic Party over support for Israel's Gaza genocide threatens to fracture the Democratic coalition, but the most salient issues in the election are domestic: the economy, the struggle for racial justice and against white supremacy, related issues of immigration and constitutional democracy, and reproductive rights.

The U.S. Civil War's "Lost Cause" of white supremacy ideology remains a driving force in U.S. political culture. We saw this when Donald Trump blessed the "very good people" in the notorious 2018 Charlottesville neo-Nazi march and again when Confederate flags led the January 6 failed *coup d'état*. Throughout the history of U.S. Jim Crow apartheid, the near slavery of Southern sharecropping, Ku Klux Klan terrorism (Trump's father was a member of the Klan,) to systemic racial ballot box obstacles, and discriminatory immigration and economic policies, campaigning to entrench white supremacy and the struggle to overturn it have profoundly defined U.S. politics. The modern version didn't begin with Trump. Recall Nixon's "Southern Strategy," Ronald Reagan launching his presidential campaign in Philadelphia, Mississippi, the site of 1960s assassinations of civil rights activists, and George H.W. Bush's racist Willie Horton television ads.

In an era of economic insecurity, aggravated by the export of U.S. jobs to low wage platforms from China and Vietnam to Mexico, Donald Trump has generated cult-like white working class support with unvarnished divide and conquer calls and policies promoting white Christian nationalism: "Our inner cities, African Americans, Hispanics are living in hell." He has charged that Barak Obama and Kamala Harris aren't American. Immigrants, he wailed, are "animals. 'Biden would "hurt God" and target Christians, and the list goes on. The most obvious determinant of who supports Trump is whether he or she is racist.

It was in these contexts – economic insecurity, racism, misogyny, and increasing authoritarianism – that Kamala Harris and Walz developed their domestic policy priorities: still

vaguely defined commitments to a “caring” or “opportunity economy” and advocacy of abortion rights are in the fore. In the wake of Biden’s massive post-pandemic restructuring of the U.S. economy, Harris and Walz seek to do little more than fine tune Bidenomics.

Campaigning with the slogan “She’s for the middle class because she is from the middle class,” Kamala gave her “big” economic policy speech days before the Democratic convention. While Trump responded that Harris and Walz are “communists” and the *Washington Post* editorialized that her plan is little more than “populist gimmicks,” the Nobel economic laureate Paul Krugman wrote that they had “staked out a moderately center-left position, not too different from President Biden’s original Build Back Better agenda.” Most importantly are her calls for restoring the now expired expanded child tax credit, which early in the Biden administration reduced child poverty by half. In the midst of the national housing crisis, the Harris-Walz economic plan calls for tax incentives for home builders and first-time home buyers. This may prove to be modestly helpful, but it fails to address the central cause of the housing shortage: zoning laws that block new housing construction. Harris’ call for legislation to ban grocery price gouging – a major driver of inflation – has been misrepresented by Republicans committed to the freedom to exploit and by much of the press as “price controls.”

Harris’s other tax policies include reversing the 2017 Trump trillion dollar a year tax cut for the wealthy, increasing the corporate taxation rate from 21% to 28%, her pledge not to raise taxes on people making less than \$400,000 a year, and joining Trump’s pledge to end federal taxation on tips, a commitment that could contribute to winning Nevada’s electoral votes.

Even as Trump has won plutocratic billionaire support, Jeffrey Sonnenfield, of Yale University’s School of Management argues that there are reasons why “CEOs are excited about Kamala Harris.” For them she represents fidelity to the rule of law and thus is a bastion against Trump again “inserting himself into private business and regulatory processes to inflict personal vendettas.” Harris is less committed to antitrust court challenges than Biden. Unlike Trump, Harris’ tax policies don’t promise massive increases in the national debt that would generate economic instability. Immigrant reform would provide corporations needed access to skilled immigrant workers, not to mention that currently one in four billion dollar startups have been initiated by former immigrant students. And, having cut her political teeth in the San Francisco Bay area, including Silicon Vally, Kamala Harris has deep ties to a significant number of the nation’s most influential corporate leaders.

Women’s energy is the driving force of the Harris-Walz campaign. More important than shattering the glass ceiling – the centerpiece of Hillary Clinton’s stemwinding convention speech – has been resistance to the extremist Supreme Court’s overturning women’s right to abortion in 2022, termed “reproductive freedom” in the Harris campaign. Access to abortion is now dependent on state, not national, legislation, and it has been seriously curtailed or outlawed in 21 states. More restrictions are on the drawing boards. Alabama’s MAGA supreme court is leading the charge with its decision that embryos are unborn children” and its banning vitro fertilization (IVF,) U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thomas recently signaled that legal access to contraceptives may be next to be challenged. And both J.D. Vance, Trump’s vice-president running mate, and Trump’s Project 2025 advocate policies akin to relegating women to a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of being barefoot and pregnant, and in the kitchen.

Rallying for the right to choose has been a powerful driver of recent women’s political engagement and a winning formula for Democrats. In every state where referendums to restore the right to abortion have been held, including conservative states like Kansas, prochoice advocates have prevailed. Kamala Harris has been a leading force within the Biden Administration in pressing for the restoration of the Roe vs. Wade right to abortion, saying among other things that “This generation now has fewer rights than their mothers and grandmothers.” These commitments were on display during the first night of the convention when delegates were brought to tears by Hadley Duvall’s testimony about being denied an abortion as a 12 year-old after having been raped by her stepfather, and by Amanda Zurawski and Kaitlyn Joshua who testified about being denied abortions during dangerous failed pregnancies.

Adding to the campaign’s *bona fides* on reproductive freedom is former football coach and Minnesota governor Tim Walz. We have been reminded of his history as a strong advocate of abortion rights. Including his participation with Vice President Harris in a March 2024 visit to a Planned Parenthood health center that provides abortions.

And then there is race. Since her college days and driven by her experiences as a woman of color, Harris has been a dedicated advocate of civil rights. Like Biden and Obama, Harris warns that freedom in the U.S. is “under profound threat.” In a recent keynote address to the South Carolina chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, she urged resistance to Republican and Supreme Court assaults on voting and reproductive rights, the



denial of Black history, and book bans that have become rampant in Republican controlled states and communities. Like Barak Obama, to avoid further aggravating national racial and gender divisions, Kamala Harris underplays her precedent breaking roles as the first woman and person of color to be vice-president and to lead a major party ticket for the presidency. Others do that for her.

Contrary to Republican charges, Vice President Harris is hardly responsible for the continuing tide of immigration across the U.S. southern border. Not the country's "immigration czar" as Republican charge, in 2021 she was assigned the role of addressing the "root cause" of immigration to the U.S. from Central America and Mexico. In that role she secured \$4.2 billion in private funding for job creation in Central America, and controversially in Guatemala told Central Americans "Do not come. Do not come...If you come to our border, you will be turned back."

Not an anti-immigrant bigot, Harris supported President Biden's efforts to negotiate a bipartisan border security and immigration deal with Republicans. That effort was blocked by Donald Trump as he sought political advantage by sowing further chaos. Harris has signaled a somewhat harder line on border control, matched with a still to be defined "path to citizenship" for at least some who are already in the country. Should Democrats regain control of Congress, we should expect renewed efforts for immigration reform, especially as the U.S. remains in need of skilled and unskilled workers.

When it comes to the existential climate emergency *Reuters* reports that "Opinion polls show broad support for tackling climate change, especially among younger voters. But unfortunately, the Harris-Walz campaign seeks to avoid alienating anyone. Several aides describe Harris' plan on controversial energy issues as one of "strategic ambiguity." Walz did win meaningful reductions in pollution standards for autos, and as a Senator Harris sought to address deadly and disproportionate levels of pollution in Black and Hispanic communities. But to protect jobs and win votes in Pennsylvania and several Midwestern states, Harris reversed her earlier support for a ban on fracking to produce more oil. As a member of Congress Walz voted to complete construction of the deeply controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline, and as governor he lifted Minnesota's moratorium on building nuclear plants. Not an encouraging record.

### **Aggressive Foreign & Military Policies**

It wasn't until the final night of the convention that pandering to military power took the stage. Until then, conventioners were insulated from possible second thoughts they might have about the Party's role in the constructing, maintaining, and expanding of what is in truth an Empire.

The run up to Harris' acceptance speech included tough talk from former CIA Director and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta who celebrated America's "warriors" and by a parade of members of Congress who have served in the military: Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. With the exception of celebrating the assassination of Osama Bin Laden, there were no references to those wars, nor to President's role as "nuclear monarch" with the sole authority to launch an omnicidal nuclear war. References to what President Eisenhower initially termed the military-industrial-Congressional complex and the Party's integration with it were missing in action. So too were any references to President Biden's recent insistence that Prime Minister Sholtz accept deployment of U.S. dual capable tomahawk intermediate range missiles in Germany capable of reaching western Russia.

But, as the conservative journalist Davd Brooks observed, Harris concluded her rousing acceptance speech with "an aggressive picture of America in the world." She built on her commitment to maintain the "world's most lethal" military, with the promise to lead in the space and artificial intelligence arms races and promised that "America – not China – wins the competition for the 21<sup>st</sup> century," a euphemistic reference to the struggle for hegemony. Echoing the Biden paradigm and the commitment to new Cold Wars, and omitting embarrassing references to Saudi Arabia, Israeli, and more than a few other U.S. allies, she told her audiences that she knew where she and the country stand in the "enduring struggle between democracy and tyranny."

Harris came to the Senate in 2017 with little foreign policy knowledge or experience, but contrary to Donald Trump's accusations, she is anything but a foreign and military policy ingenue. The Biden White House downplayed her foreign and military policy roles, but once she emerged as the Democrats' presidential nominee it was reported that she participated in nearly every Biden era National Security Council meeting, where U.S. foreign and military policies are made. Similarly, she has been involved in almost every one of the President's Daily Briefings, the intelligence community's daily super-secret briefings about threats, developments, and opportunities around the world. Ron Klain, Biden's first Chief of Staff, wrote that Harris came to

the intelligence briefings as the “best prepared, ready with questions, having already reviewed the written intelligence and ready to help ask hard questions.” The journalist Fred Kaplan put it differently: her presence in these briefings “exposed her to more information...than any newly elected president has ever had coming into office in more than a century.” As Vice President, she visited 21 nations on 17 foreign trips and met with more than 150 foreign leaders. In three of the past four years, she led the U.S delegation to the Munich Security Conference.

We should expect Harris to hew to the trajectory of Biden’s foreign and military policies. Along her way, she has recruited a cadre of traditional national security advisors. As Vice President, her first national security advisor was Nancy McEldowney, a career US diplomat and former director of the Foreign Service Institute. McEldowney was succeeded by Philip Gordon, Harris’ current and very influential foreign policy advisor, who served on Bill Clinton’s National Security Council Staff and as an Obama European and Middle East specialist . Gordon’ deputy has been Rebecca Lisner, formerly of the Naval War College and the woman who oversaw the development of the Biden National Security Strategy. Recall that the Strategy declares that the Post-Cold war era is over, that the struggle with China – Washington’s only peer competitor – to shape what follows is under way. It also reiterated the United States’ commitment to its first-strike nuclear arsenal and warfighting doctrine.

According to a *Wall Street Journal* reports that Harris blames Sullivan along with Blinken for failing to contain Israel in Gaza, and Phillip Gordon will likely be appointed to succeed Jake Sullivan as National Security Advisor. Gordon was a career diplomat who is seen as a “pragmatic internationalist” rather than a progressive. He served as President Obama’s first Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian affairs and later as his Special Assistant to the President and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf Region.

Gordon’s decisive worldview reorientation came in response to George W. Bush’s regime change war in Iraq which led him to understand that the U.S. is not always a force for good or on the right side of history. Bush’s wars, he understood, left that country shattered and squandered the United States reputation and legitimacy. As a review of the books written by Gordon explains, he believes that U.S. primacy can be “improved,” but only with respect for international law and multilateral institution. “The institutions of U.S. power” Gordon believes,

“are not in themselves wrong; it is the people who run them who make them fall short of their promise.” Staff them with better leaders he argues, and the U.S. can play its historical role as a “catalyst for democracy.” Recognizing that regime change doesn’t work, the U.S. must act judiciously with the means consistent with the ends.

Gordon is seen as a Europeanist and the E.U.’s man in Washington. Norbert Rottgen, a Christian Democrat German parliamentarian has commented that Gordon believes that “European security is the cornerstone of US global power,” and he is probably correct. Gordon has been a hardliner opposing Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and criticized Olaf Sholz for resisting pressure to send German long-rang Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine. But he can be a subtle strategist, as demonstrated in his not being threatened by calls for a more autonomous Europe and his belief that a strong Europe is in the United States’ interest.

“Europeanist” though he may be, Camille Grand, the former NATO Assistant Secretary General, tells us that Gordon recognizes that Europe is “no longer the alpha and omega of American’s foreign policy. There is of course China, the new “alpha and omega” of U.S. foreign, military, and economic policies, and with the exception of his Deputy Rebecca Linser’s China containment work on the Biden National Security Strategy, Gordon’s fingerprints on Harris’ approach are hard to find..

Seeking to prevent an election shattering of the Democratic Party’s coalition, Kamala Harris has attempted to have it both ways on the Gaza genocide. In her acceptance speech, she honored the growing Democratic majority who have been outraged by Israel’s indiscriminate destruction of Gaza and its people. Possibly speaking from her heart, Harris reiterated the call for a ceasefire and stated that “What has happened in Gaza over the past 10 months is devastating...The scale of suffering is heartbreaking.” She then stated her ostensible commitment that Palestinians’ right to “realize their right to dignity, security, freedom and self-determination” and to the long disregarded and fading possibility of a two-state solution.

But, like Biden, the leverage she pledged to exercise was to enhance Israel’s military power, not to achieve a ceasefire. As she said, “Let me be clear, I will always stand up for Israel’s right to defend itself, and I will always ensure Israel has the ability to defend itself.” Like Biden, her campaign has been clear in refusing to pressure Netanyahu and his extremist partners by withholding shipment of bombs and other weapons to Israel. And, as the Israeli Prime Minister’s campaign of assassinations in Iran and Lebanon have taken us to the brink of regional

war, Harris pledged “to defend our forces” who for reasons she didn’t dare to state find themselves deployed across Southwest Asia “and our interests against Iran and Iran-backed terrorists.”

Harris has been a hawk on Ukraine in its war against Russia providing Kyiv “ full-throated support.” We should expect her to continue unwavering support for NATO and U.S. dominion over Europe. As she boasted in Chicago, “Five days before Russia attacked Ukraine, I met with President Zelensky to warn him about Russia’s plan to invade. I helped mobilize a global response — over 50 countries — to defend against Putin’s aggression. And as president, I will stand strong with Ukraine and our NATO allies.”

Largely unknown prior to the convention was that in February 2022, when the U.S. intelligence community first reported that Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine was imminent, Harris pressed for the super-secret intelligence to be shared with Ukrainian President Zelensky. It was Harris who was then dispatched to meet with Zelensky in Kyiv to share the detailed intelligence and Washington’s perceptions of his options. She has since met Zelensky five times.

There has been no daylight between Harris and Biden in their support for Zelensky’s “peace diplomacy” that unrealistically demands return to Ukraine’s pre-2014 borders. (Worth noting is the Ukrainian sociologist Volodymyr Ishchenko’s assertion that before Putin’s invasion most Ukrainians were willing to be done with turmoil in the eastern 20% of Ukraine and accept its succession to Russia.) There has been no indication that in future negotiations Harris would accept a neutral Ukraine with credible guarantees or to putting the questions Crimean, Donetsk, and Luhansk sovereignty to fair referenda or onto the diplomatic shelf for later resolution.

And like Biden, at Munich Security conferences, Harris has preached that the ‘backbone’ of preservation of Western principles and security is NATO — “the greatest military alliance the world has ever seen.”

Consistent with Biden, Trump, and the etiquette of U.S. political discourse, in Harris’s acceptance speech there were no references to U.S. imperial wars, coups, or provocative shows of force with which Washington won its Indo-Pacific Empire, nor to the region spanning Biden-Harris lattice-like network of tripartite and bilateral U.S alliances, or to global NATO’s new roles in the campaign to contain China. In her acceptance speech, Harris mentioned China only once, and then only in relationship to the contest for supremacy in space and AI. These, not incidentally, are at the defining edges of 21<sup>st</sup> century military power. Elsewhere Harris has been

critical of Beijing's repression of human rights and warned about the Chinese "threat" to U.S. interests and to Washington's allies in the Asia-Pacific. Following China's simulated blockade of Taiwan in response to Nancy Pelosi's counter-productive and unwanted 2022 trip Taiwan, Harris also traveled to Asia. There, in meetings with allies and a rally with some of the 55,000 troops based in Japan she reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to deter China. She has not been shy in condemning China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea where it seeks to challenge the Seventh Fleet's dominance in what has been an America Lake since the end of the Pacific War.. And as Beijing has encroached in what are obviously Philippine territorial waters, she has played a key role in facilitating Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s (the former dictator's son) reaffirmation and deepening of the U.S.-Philippines alliance after his predecessor's flirtations with China.

Assuming that her audiences either don't know or disregard the past and present practice of U.S. imperialism Harris asserts that she is committed to the misnamed "rules based order" and to a "free and open Indo-Pacific" to ensure stability and commerce. She warns that Beijing is unique as it "continues to coerce, to intimidate and to make claims to the vast majority of the South China Sea." And rather than pursue common security solutions to the dilemmas presented by Taiwan, she repeats Washington's unofficial commitment to defend Taiwan. including the Pentagon's first-strike doctrine which serves as the foundation of that commitment.

In these regards we have to hope that Tim Walz will be more than a window dressing Vice President and will find ways to influence a Harris administration with his understanding that the storied China threat is "hyperbole" and the importance of building on the two powers' shared interests.

Amidst growing international demands to cut military spending by at least 10%, there have been no hints of Harris objecting to Biden's massive military spending increases. That said, if she is elected, we should not expect her to match Trump's call for gargantuan increases in Pentagon spending.

What else might we expect from Kamala Harris if she prevails between now and November 5? Given that Africa is projected to have a quarter of the world's population by 2050, the markets for goods and services that go with that, as well as its stores of commercially useful natural resources a Harris administration will likely pay greater attention to U.S. relations with the African continent than we have seen in recent years. Similarly, given her Caribbean roots, its

resources, markets, and most of all its Monroe Doctrine geopolitical relationship to the United States, greater attention may also be paid to Latin America.

All of which brings us back to where we began. Harris remains the uncertain bastion in the struggle to defend constitutional democracy. The outcome of the election cannot be accurately predicted, and we are reminded that only once has a sitting vice president prevailed in an election. Between now and then Harris will be pressed to become more forthcoming about her policy commitments and how they can be achieved. Unless the Democrats win control of one or both houses of Congress, and with right-wing extremist control of the Supreme Court, only minimal progress will be made on the Harris-Walz domestic agenda. And as Harris or Trump aggressively challenge the world, each in her or his unique ways, our work to end and prevent catastrophe remains ahead of us.

August 27, 2024

Eine Kurzfassung des Beitrages erschien auf Deutsch in WeltTrends 202 – USA am Scheideweg.

<https://welttrends.de/welttrends-202-usa-am-scheideweg/>

Resources:

Where Harris and Walz stand on 2024's biggest policy issues

<https://www.politico.com/interactives/2024/kamala-harris-tim-walz-policy-2024-election/>

Why Kamala Harris's Politics Are So Hard to Pin Down

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/08/kamala-harris-politics-ideology-liberal/679419/>

The times demand serious economic ideas. Harris supplies gimmicks

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/08/16/harris-economy-plan-gimmicks/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/08/kamala-harris-politics-ideology-liberal/679419/>

7 Reasons Why CEOs Are Excited About Kamala Harris – Time Magazine

<https://time.com/7003946/business-leaders-kamala-harris-election/>

**Kamala Harris Has Been Much More Involved in Foreign Policy Than We Realize**

<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2024/08/kamala-harris-foreign-policy-2024-presidential-election.html>

### **The Kamala Harris Doctrine**

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/07/26/kamala-harris-policy-china-russia-trade-immigration-israel-gaza-india/>

The Harris Doctrine

<https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/the-harris-doctrine/>

What Kamala Harris' Foreign Policy Could Look Like

<https://www.politico.com/news/2024/07/21/kamala-harris-foreign-policy-00170143>

What Is Kamala Harris's foreign policy? It's been a work in progress

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Philip Gordon: Foreign Policy Pragmatist with Kamala Harris's Ear

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### **Phil Gordon: Europe's 'ally' on Kamala Harris' team**

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Phillip Gordon's *Allies at War*

Rebecca Lisner's *Open World: How America Can Win the Contest for Twenty-First-Century Order*.

See Ann's links

Fred Kaplan

Encyclopedia Britannica

Voting Record