

Neocons Celebrate Kamala's Foreign Policy Speech

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): I think one of the most notable political developments over the last eight years has been the very vocal, invisible migration of the group of people who had been called neocons in the Republican Party. Back when I started writing about politics, started following politics very closely in the wake of 9/11, these were the people inside the Bush and Cheney administration who were maximalist supporters of the war on terror, wanted to torture and kidnap and have due process-free camps. They were the ones who not only were advocating the invasion of Iraq and the changing of the government Iraq, before 9/11 and then used 9/11 as the excuse to do so, but they also wanted to topple multiple other countries, all of whom coincidentally happened to be adversarial to Israel throughout the Middle East. And their main goal was to go from Baghdad, where we had toppled Saddam Hussein for who knows what reason into Tehran to do the same to the Iranian government. These are the people who believe that war is always the answer, who support endless wars, who see the world through this militaristic lens. And they had always been for good reasons during the Bush and Cheney era, part of the Republican Party. They had previously, many of them, been connected to not just the Democratic Party, but the left wing political movements back in the 60s and 70s until they kind of grew up and decided that they wanted to make sure that the US military was constantly being used to interfere in and apply American force all throughout the world. Never their families, but other Americans' families.

And then you have kind of the the spawns of these neocons who don't have that same pedigree, who don't have that same trajectory, but who very much embrace the worldview and vision of the neocons – and when I started writing about politics, liberals talked about neocons even more viciously than they now talk about Trump. They were constantly compared to Hitler, Nazis, bloodthirsty sociopaths. Bill Kristol and David Frum in the Weekly Standard and all of these kinds of militaristic think tanks, people from the Bush administration itself, like the beloved MSNBC host Nicolle Wallace or Joe Scarborough, both of whom were very much advocates of this view. Almost all of them, not all of them, but almost all of them have migrated to the Democratic Party, who particularly are driven by

hatred of Trump but now have become not just haters of Trump, but hard core Democratic partisans. And obviously during her speech, Kamala Harris was required to say something about the things she thought about foreign policy. And in her speech, she continuously affirmed the core worldview of these neocons, of these militarists about the US role in the world, about what the United States president is obligated to do, about how we see ourselves in a way that very predictably and understandably provoked enormous praise from exactly those neocons who back in the day were hard core supporters of George Bush and Dick Cheney, because that too was pursuing the militaristic neocon agenda back then. These people haven't changed any of their views. Not a single view. They don't apologise for any of their views. They haven't changed their views. They just now recognise that, unlike before, when the Republican Party was their optimal vessel for implementing this worldview, now the Democratic Party is. They don't trust Trump to do it. They don't trust him to stay in NATO and to fight wars that way, to fund the war in Ukraine, to use US forces all around the world. They trust the Democrats far more to do so. And Kamala Harris gave them even more reason to be excited about the Democratic Party, because the foreign policy vision she laid out could have come directly out of the mouth of George Bush. In fact, pretty much did, both at the 2000 and 2004 Republican convention and then out of the mouth of John McCain in the 2008 convention. So let's first take a look at Kamala Harris reading from her teleprompter, a speech somebody wrote for her about her animating views on foreign policy.

Kamala Harris (KH): With respect to the war in Gaza, President Biden and I are working around the clock because now is the time to get a hostage deal and a cease fire deal done. And let me be clear –

GG: No, that's a totally fake proclamation. Joe Biden has said the same thing many times. Obviously, the United States could force a cease fire at any moment by simply stop giving the Israelis the arms and money on which they depend to prosecute the war. The bombs Israel drops on Gaza are American bombs. They come from the United States. We deliver those bombs to the Israelis specifically for that reason. Joe Biden has been saying for ten months now that he wants a ceasefire, but none is coming because the Americans aren't willing to do anything to actually make it happen. So that statement, even though people cheered like dumb seals as though she were saying something profound or important, it's just standard Democratic Party tripe. Their view is: Oh, Israel wants a ceasefire too, the problem is Hamas. Here's the rest of what Kamala Harris said after throwing that little crumb to the dumb left.

KH: And 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, because the people of Israel must never again face the horror that a terrorist organisation called Hamas caused on October 7th.

GG: Can you believe that there have been people on the liberal left wing of the Democratic Party, who have been trying to deceive and lie to young voters and Muslim voters and leftists by telling them that Kamala Harris secretly has a different policy than Joe Biden does when it comes to Israel? Even though everything in Kamala Harris's career suggests exactly the opposite. And then they issue a platform for the Democratic Party, where the section on Israel

sounds exactly like the Democratic Party view of Israel for many decades: We will give everything Israel needs, we will pay for Israel's military, we'll give them all the weapons they need to make sure that they maintain military superiority over all their neighbours, we will intervene in order to defend them. That's what she's saying: I will never allow Israel to be without the United States and be without our promise and commitment to defend Israel and everything we do. That is the view of Kamala Harris and the Democratic Party, obviously. She doesn't have any different views than Joe Biden and yet these people who have gone around for ten months calling this war in Gaza a genocide are not just voting for the people who have administered it and funded it and armed it, but the people who are promising to continue to do so. Imagine how little self-respect you have to have to do that.

KH: ...including unspeakable sexual violence and the massacre of young people at a music festival. At the same time, what has happened in Gaza over the past ten months is devastating. So many innocent lives lost. Desperate, hungry people fleeing for safety over and over again. The scale of suffering is heartbreaking. President Biden and I are working to end this war such that Israel is secure, the hostages are released, the suffering in Gaza ends, and the Palestinian people can realise their right to dignity, security, freedom and self –

GG: Okay. So that was the first part. Very standard pro-Israel speech with a little rhetorical acknowledgement to the fact that she believes the Palestinian people are humans, I guess, but continuing to provide the arms to destroy their society and kill all the innocent people as she feels very terrible about it. That's the policy of the Democratic Party, of Joe Biden and of Kamala Harris. Here is the next clip where she talks about her view of foreign policy.

KH: And know this: I will never hesitate to take whatever action is necessary to defend our forces and our interests against Iran and Iran backed terrorists. I will not cosy up to tyrants and dictators like Kim Jong Un who are rooting for Trump, who are rooting for Trump. Because you know, they know he is easy to manipulate with flattery and favours. They know Trump won't hold autocrats accountable because he wants to be an autocrat himself. And as president, I will never waver in defence of America's security and ideals, because in the enduring struggle between democracy and tyranny, I know where I stand and I know where the United States belongs.

GG: So this is the kind of thing that, for example, if she were to sit down with a competent journalist, a competent journalist might say, well, you were saying in your speech that you will never side with tyrants the way Donald Trump does, that you believe the role of the United States in the world is to undermine and subvert tyranny and authoritarianism and autocracy, and instead fight for freedom. And yet, just two weeks before you said that your administration authorised the largest sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia, one of the worst despots on the planet – how can you reconcile arming and funding and protecting and propping up the regime of Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia at the same time that you're issuing this rhetoric about the role of the United States in the world being to undermine tyrants and the like, or the same with General Sisi in Egypt or all the other tyrannies with which the Democratic Party and the Biden administration have long been

aligned. This is the benefit of just reading from a teleprompter. You get to say things that are blatantly untrue. You hire speechwriters to make it sound uplifting. You animate this empty-headed audience filling this convention who are like, hypnotised with happiness and glee. But there's no accountability. There's no requirement to actually answer any questions. But this is the kind of rhetoric that neocons love. This is what justified the war in Iraq. The reason we were going into Iraq, besides the lie about weapons of mass destruction, the other reason that we were told is because Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator, which he was and the United States wants to go and liberate the Iraqi people and bring them freedom and democracy, because that's who we are as a people. We go to war benevolently. We go to free people to remove dictators. This is the propagandistic framework that has justified pretty much every American war over the last 60 years. That was the claim in Vietnam. We were freeing the Vietnamese people from the Communists. We were freeing the Libyans from Muammar Gadhafi. We were freeing the Syrians from Bashar al-Assad. We're freeing the Ukrainians from the tyranny of Vladimir Putin, etc., etc. even though the United States has always been and continues to be in bed with every single pro-American dictatorship that exists. In fact we impose those dictatorships.

Just last year, my former colleagues at The Intercept, Ryan Grim and Murtaza Hussain broke the story that the very popular Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, had been overthrown by the Pakistani military and put in jail in collaboration with the CIA and the United States government. We don't go around the world spreading democracy. We go around the world subverting it. But obviously, if people know that no one's going to support wars. Like, what are these wars for? People want to feel good about the wars. And this is the rhetorical framework that justifies it. You may recall that Trump, at the beginning of his presidency, was interviewed by Bill O'Reilly. And he asked Trump, why are you so eager to have a good relationship with Putin when he kills people? He's a murderer. And then Trump said, you don't think we kill people? You think we're so innocent? That kind of candour is devastating to the neocon worldview, to the rhetorical framework that permits wars to constantly be waged in the interests of nobody other than the tiny elite in Washington. And the fact that Kamala Harris, in such an excited way, is reading from the script that affirms that is one of the reasons why, as we're about to show you, neocons were over the moon with all the foreign policy passages that she read from the teleprompter in her speech. Here's one more of Kamala Harris talking about foreign policy.

KH: As commander-in-chief, I will ensure America always has the strongest, most lethal fighting force in the world. And I will fulfil our sacred obligation to care for our troops and their families. And I will always honour and never disparage their service and their sacrifice.

GG: I mean, even if we go back to the Clintons, for as long as I can remember, the Democratic Party view was we spent too much our military, we go into massive debt for our military, we spend close to \$1 trillion every year on it. It goes to corruption. We cannot even audit where it goes. It's wasted. We don't need to constantly be on a war footing. We can use that money instead to benefit the lives of American people. There's no more of that in the Democratic Party. None. The idea that we will outspend everybody to make sure our military

is the biggest, largest, most expensive is standard Democratic Party dogma now. And that's why the people not only were happy that Kamala said it but they themselves were cheering for it because they think that that is the role of the United States, that we go around the world waging wars for good reasons like we're doing in Ukraine, and they want that to continue. Now, here is one of the longtime Republican operatives, Tim Miller, who worked for people like Mitt Romney and other Republican candidates until Donald Trump came along and he turned into a Democratic Party booster even though he hasn't changed his ideology at all. Here he is talking to Jen Psaki on MSNBC about all the reasons he's so happy with her foreign policy. Remember, this is a career Republican operative who is now for good reason, finding himself far more comfortable within the Democratic Party.

Jen Psaki (JP): What did you make of her Trump argument tonight and the pieces in it? Was anything missing? Was anything you didn't think needed to be in there?

Tim Miller (TM): No. I thought she was phenomenal tonight, honestly. I think that from a Never-Trumper perspective our people were ebullient. I mean, they were just overjoyed. It was a good speech. Yeah, it was right down the plate for what I think the kind of former Republicans, independents, these types of swing voters we're looking for tonight, particularly in the critiques of Trump. And you showed that –

GG: The Never-Trumpers, the former Republicans, the establishment Republicans who hate Trump and have joined the Democratic Party were over the moon. This is right down the plate, what Kamala Harris fed them. And for good reason. If you're someone like this, who was a supporter of John McCain and worships Mitt Romney and the whole Bush-Cheney administration, this is the kind of thing exactly that you want to hear. And you don't hear that much in the Republican Party. Although you hear it from Republican establishment politicians, but not the faction in control. That's why they've left the Republican Party for the Democratic Party, and are not just in it, but leading it as evidenced by the fact that their worldview, their neocon, world-militaristic worldview, is now the predominant vision of the Democratic Party and its adherents. Which is why they're saying: we didn't just like the speech, we were all over the moon with it! These Never-Trump Republicans.

TM: All that was good. My favourite one you didn't include though. Which was, when she said, "I will not cosy up to tyrants and dictators like Kim Jong Un who are rooting for Trump." And then she stomped on that line and she was like, "they're rooting for Trump." Like, that's real, really think about that. Like, the dictators are rooting for him because they see him as one of them. I thought that was a very powerful attack line in speaking to this kind of national security type of Republican. Hopefully some of these people will say on the campaign trail, former Republican types and, and a lot of them, I don't think, knew a lot about Kamala Harris's foreign policy. Something I've been saying in the secret Never-Trumper meetings for like three months.

JP: Tweets? Or text chains?

TM: Yeah, there's text chains, there's secret meetings. And all of them are like: I don't think you realise how strong she is on this stuff, how aligned she is with kind of the bipartisan tradition of American strength, working with our allies and and how hostile she is to this isolationist, authoritarian kind of Donald-Trump-JD-Vance-movement. And I think that she really did a great job of drawing that contrast tonight. And I think that there are some people that are going to be like, whoa, that's news to me. This is pretty good.

GG: So when he's talking about these secret rooms of Never-Trump supporters, he's talking about Bill Kristol, who's his boss. He writes for Bill Kristol's website The Bulwark. That's who he's talking about. Bill Kristol, who just ten years ago, liberals viewed as the root of evil, the living and breathing manifestation of Satan who had been plotting and planning every conceivable American war. And that's what he's saying, in these secret neocon chats they've been saying for months that they know that Kamala Harris is one of them. And when she gave her speech saying so, they were as ecstatic as could be. If you believe in the neocon worldview, you should absolutely vote for Kamala Harris. That's what all of these people are telling you. Here is Bill Kristol himself, during the convention last night, he was referring to a speech by Leon Panetta, who ran the CIA under Barack Obama and who is not just a CIA director, but a hard core believer in militarism. And he said: "Leon Panetta now quoting Ronald Reagan, my kind of Democratic convention." And it is Bill Kristol's kind of convention. One of the speakers who spoke was also a former Republican member of Congress and a very hardcore militarist, Adam Kinzinger. He was forced out of Congress because he was going to lose the way Liz Cheney did, from a challenge in his own party, and he just sort of slinked away. He got a CNN contract. Now he's speaking at the Democratic convention where he belongs, who shares the same worldview. I'm sure he's in these Never-Trump foreign policy groups. And here's part of what he said. They gave him a prime time slot. Adam Kinzinger. And here's what he said.

Adam Kinzinger (AK): Our democracy was frayed by the events of January 6th, as Donald Trump's deceit and dishonour led to a siege on the United States Capitol. That day, I stood witness to a profound sorrow. The desecration of our sacred tradition, of peaceful transition of power, tarnished by a man too fragile, too vain and too weak to accept defeat. How can a party claim to be patriotic if it idolises a man who tried to overthrow a free and fair election? How? How can a party claim to stand for liberty if it sees a fight for freedom in Ukraine? An attack pitting tyranny against democracy, a challenge to everything our nation claims to be? And it retreats. It equivocates. It nominates a man who is weirdly obsessed with Putin. And his running mate who said, quote, "I don't care what happens in Ukraine." Then he wants to be vice president. Yeah. How can a party claim to be conservative when it tarnishes the gifts that our forebears fought for?

GG: So, in other words, the Democratic Party is the real Conservative Party. That's the message that Adam Kinzinger is giving. And his rationale for that, in part, is unlike Donald Trump, who wants to get the United States and extricate it from foreign wars, which is an unpatriotic thing to do, the Democratic Party is the party that wants to go around fighting

Russia and fighting other countries in foreign wars, in Europe and everywhere else. And that's why Adam Kinzinger is a democrat. Here's a little bit more of what he has to say.

AK: Make the right choice. Vote for our bedrock values and vote for Kamala Harris. God bless you.

Anderson Cooper: And former Congressman Adam Kinzinger is with us now. He is a senior CNN political commentator. For other Republicans, independents, people on the fence or undecided who are out there in the television audience listening, what do you think the impact of her speech is tonight?

AK: Look, I thought her speech was good. Actually, really good. But here's what I thought was interesting: Donald Trump has ceded so much ground that used to be traditionally Republican ground. So let's talk about national defence, Ukraine – this is all stuff Donald Trump should have been talking about at his convention, if he was a little more of a traditional Republican. Kamala came in and took that ground. I mean, she wasn't scared to do like, kind of, the 'oh well, we don't want to get to –". She took the ground on immigration. She reminded people that he tanked the immigration bill. She took the ground in Ukraine. And I think if you're an undecided Republican out there, you look and you're like, that's gonna be tough for me to not vote for Kamala now, because she literally gave me the things that I was concerned about.

GG: I agree with that. That's what I'm saying. If you are a kind of pre-Trump establishment Republican, the kind that loves George Bush and Dick Cheney, that loves John McCain, thinks John McCain's foreign policy and John McCain himself are heroic – it is absolutely the case that you should vote for the Democratic Party. As Bill Kristol said, this is my Democratic Party. And it is. And it's not just for me, this incredible development that so many neocons who ten years ago were considered to be, fascist and Nazis by the standard American liberals who are now Democrats, nobody cares to ask why that is. No democrat is saying, wait a minute, why is it – could all these people who started all these wars, who we were saying were fascist and bloodthirsty monsters just a decade ago, none of whom have changed their views about anything, why are they so excited about our party now? And they go on there and they say the Democratic Party is the Conservative Party, meaning conservative in the sense of the conservative activism and militarism of George Bush and Dick Cheney. And the Democrats are so happy to hear that. Because that's what they believe as well. That is what the party is. And so when these neocons are celebrating, they're not doing that to pretend they're doing that because they understand that they've taken over this party, but this party is theirs, and the party has been recreated in their image.

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END

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