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Patrick Lawrence:

The ‘War Party’ Makes Its Plans

Volodymyr Zelensky now says he wants to show Biden, and subsequently Harris and Trump, his “plan for victory over Russia.”



Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the military alliance’s Washington summit in July. (NATO/Flicker, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The Biden White House and the Democratic Party machine trying to advance Kamala Harris from No. 2 in the regime to No. 1 gets more interesting by the week, I have to say.

The Harris campaign has at last, two months after the party's elites and financiers railroaded her candidacy past any semblance of a democratic process, published a platform it calls A New Way Forward, and I will get to this in due course.

I am less interested now in words posted on a website than in two recent developments we ought to consider together even if no one has yet thought to do so.

Slowly and very surely, it becomes clear by way of these weekly turns how a new Democratic regime, should Harris win on Nov. 5, proposes to manage the imperium's business.

And however many foolish voters may be illusioned otherwise, if Harris takes the White House her business will be neither more nor less than managing the imperium —the wars, the provocations, the illegal sanctions and other collective punishments, the terrorist clients in Israel, the neo-Nazis in Kiev.

Last Wednesday, Sept. 4, Liz Cheney surprised Washington and, I suppose, most of the rest of us when she announced she would support Harris's run for the presidency.

The onetime Wyoming congresswoman, a coup-cultivating warmonger who remains among the hawkier of right-wing foreign-policy hawks, was not the first Republican to jump across the aisle this political season, and she was also not the last: Two days later, Liz's pop did the same. Dick Cheney, of course, needs no introduction.

Instantly, the Harris campaign declared its delight in having the support of these courageous patriots, as the organization called them in its official statements.

A week after all this high-caliber politicking, President Joe Biden convened in the Oval Office with Keir Starmer, the new British prime minister, to consider Ukraine's proposal to fire Western-supplied missiles at targets well inside Russian territory.

The Brits are ready to oblige the Kiev regime, as are the French, but everyone — London, Paris, Kiev — needs Biden's permission to widen the war in this fashion.

At the moment, Biden and Secretary of State Blinken are in their "Well, maybe" phase, and we are meant to be on the edges of our seats wondering whether they will assent to these plans. But haven't we seen this movie before and don't we know how it ends? Wasn't it, "Maybe we will send HIMARS rocket systems," "Maybe M-1 tanks," "Maybe Patriot missiles," "Maybe F-16s"?



Biden, center, meeting with Starmer on Sept. 13 at the White House; Blinken on left and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on right. (White House/Adam Schultz)

Even before the Biden–Starmer encounter last week, Blinken and David Lammy, the British foreign secretary, during a visit to Kiev for talks with Volodymyr Zelensky, were already dropping heavy hints that Biden will once again acquiesce to the plans the Ukrainian president and the British PM were choreographed to present to him.

The stipulation Biden and Blinken now purport to insist upon is that they will not assent to letting Kiev use weapons *provided* by the U.S. — which seems to be different from weapons *made* by the U.S. — against targets in the Russian interior. This is no more than one of those hair-splits in which the Biden White House trades when it wants to look thoughtful and cautious but is neither.

Will someone tell me what damn difference it will make to Russia if Moscow takes a hit from a missile sent from Britain, France or the United States?

These people are convening to plan the Western powers’ reckless escalation of a proxy war they have no way of winning and know they have no way of winning. Desperation is as desperation does: This is my simple read of these deliberations.

Between the war-planning and the shifting political loyalties, what have we witnessed over these past couple of weeks? This is our question.

Cheneys in the Hive



Liz Cheney taking the congressional oath of office in January 2017 with her father Dick Cheney. (Office of Representative Liz Cheney, Wikimedia Commons, Public domain)

When the Cheneys, *père et fille*, enlisted in the Harris campaign's ranks, Jen O'Malley Dillon, the campaign's chairwoman, lauded the former for his courage and the latter for her patriotism.

Elsewhere in the Harris "hive," as I gather we are calling it, liberal commentators stopped just short of gushing over Liz and Dick Cheney's political migration, ignoring the fact it appears to be mere opportunism.

James Carden had a pithy piece on this, "Cheneymania Seizes the Democrats," in the Sept. 12 edition of *The American Conservative*.

"The wild applause that met Liz's announcement ... is indicative of where liberals now place their priorities," the longtime Washington commentator wrote, "and goes a long way toward explaining why they cannot be trusted on matters of national security."

There is a lot of politics in the Democrats' exuberant greeting of the Cheneys, of course. Harris' people want to make the most of divisions among Republicans, and, in the case of Liz Cheney, to exploit the animus that has arisen between her and Donald Trump.

But we must look more closely than this fully to understand this political ballet. Liz Cheney once had a public spat with Rand Paul over who was "Trumpier." Dick Cheney is guilty of more war crimes, crimes against humanity and war-profiteering than Donald Trump could dream of in his sweetest dreams.

No mention of this as we think about these two political defections? I have read or heard of none from within the Harris hive.

Stephen Cohen used to joke, except that he wasn't joking, that there is one party in Washington and it is rightly called the War Party. We have just had a reminder of the late and eminent Russianist's prescience.

There is no intent among the people telling Kamala Harris what to profess to question this nation's numerous aggressions and illegalities, or even to reconsider the Biden regime's disastrously miscalculated foreign policies, which are indistinguishable from the neoconservative agenda Democrats, once upon a time, pretended to oppose.

Read A New Way Forward, a 13-page document. The one and a half pages given to national security and foreign affairs amount to a screed dedicated to Russophobia, Sinophobia, NATophilia and "the most lethal fighting force in the world," which seems to be Harris' idea of a diplomatic corps.

This is how Steve Cohen's War Party thinks and what it sounds like. As a statement of intent, the Harris-Walz platform is entirely accommodating of the Biden White House's very likely decision to escalate the Ukraine conflict to the point of risking the World War III Biden pretends not to want.

Putin's Analysis



Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in August. (President of Russia)

The clearest, most sobering analysis of the Biden-Blinken thinking —is this my word? — about authorizing Kiev to attack targets deep inside Russia with Western-supplied missiles came from Vladimir Putin.

The Russian president spoke last Thursday, the day before Starmer's talks with Biden, in response to a reporter's question. His statement is worth reading in full, given the obvious gravity he attaches to the West's deliberations:

“What we are seeing is an attempt to substitute notions. Because this is not a question of whether the Kiev regime is allowed or not allowed to strike targets on Russian territory. It is already carrying out strikes using unmanned aerial vehicles and other means. But using Western-made long-range precision weapons is a completely different story.

The fact is that — I have mentioned this, and any expert, both in our country and in the West, will confirm this — the Ukrainian army is not capable of using cutting-edge, high-precision, long-range systems supplied by the West. They cannot do that. These weapons are impossible to employ without intelligence data from satellites, which Ukraine does not have. This can only be done using the European Union’s satellites, or U.S. satellites — in general, NATO satellites. This is the first point.

The second point — perhaps the most important, the key point even — is that only NATO military personnel can assign flight missions to these missile systems. Ukrainian servicemen cannot do this. Therefore, it is not a question of allowing the Ukrainian regime to strike Russia with these weapons or not. It is about deciding whether NATO countries become directly involved in the military conflict or not.

If this decision is made, it will mean nothing short of direct involvement — it will mean that NATO countries, the United States and European countries are parties to the war in Ukraine. This will mean their direct involvement in the conflict, and it will clearly change the very essence, the very nature of the conflict dramatically.

This will mean that NATO countries — the United States and European countries — are at war with Russia. And if this is the case, then, bearing in mind the change in the essence of the conflict, we will make appropriate decisions in response to the threats that will *be posed to us.*”

There are clearly people of sound mind within the Washington policy cliques who can read this statement for what it is and understand the risk the Biden regime contemplates as it inches toward an official decision on the missiles question.

But these wiser heads do not appear in the ascendant. The prevailing view seems to lie with people such as William Burns, the C.I.A. director, who thinks Putin is bluffing and, nonsensically enough, are willing to find out if they are right by calling said bluff.

Here is part of a letter 17 former ambassadors and generals sent to the Biden administration last week, as quoted in *The New York Times*. As you read these sentences, think about why the signatories of this letter wrote it and how it is they are as confident of their judgment as they profess:

“Easing the restrictions on Western weapons will not cause Moscow to escalate. We know this because Ukraine is already striking territory Russia considers its own—including Crimea and Kursk — with these weapons and Moscow’s response remains unchanged.”

Now think about whether those who wrote and signed this letter, and by extension those running Ukraine policy, are sane or insane.

Among the Biden regime’s purported concerns as it considers authorizing Ukraine to widen the war is what difference attacks on the Russian interior would make. The White House and the Pentagon want to see a plan, it has been reported.

It is a good question, asking about the point of this kind of escalation, but I am not sure an answer matters much to those who sit at the table in the White House cabinet room. As I have argued severally in this space, the Biden regime has foolishly cast this war as one between democracy and autocracy.

Accordingly, it can afford to risk all manner of precipitous escalations, but it cannot afford to lose.

Entering stage right, possibly on cue, Volodymyr Zelensky now says he wants to show Biden, and subsequently Harris and Trump, his “plan for victory over Russia.”

The Washington Post reported last Friday this will consist of very few parts. “All the points depend on the decision of Biden,” the Ukrainian president said at a recent forum in Kiev.

As the *Post* noted, Zelensky is to date shy of revealing these points, but there are reports, well short of confirmed, that there are three of them.

The first is the missile authorization, the second is an assurance that NATO will deploy air-defense systems to protect western Ukraine, and the third — get a load of this — is a guarantee that NATO will dispatch ground troops to rear areas of the conflict so that the Armed Forces of Ukraine can deploy more of its own troops to the front.

These proposals, if confirmed as Zelensky makes his next trip to Washington, all align in one direction: The Kiev regime’s running theme remains dragging the West further into the war rather as the Netanyahu regime in Israel is forever trying to do the same in West Asia. Zelensky, the Israeli prime minister, Biden: The world’s problem right now, or one of them, is that none of these people can afford to lose the wars their hubris led them to start.

The Anglos and the Americans are likely to make an official announcement about the use of long-range missiles against Russia after the U.N. General Assembly concludes its business on Sept. 28.

Starmer has recently indicated as much. In the best outcome we will find that Putin has rattled Washington and London such that they will step back from this latest plan to escalate.

It is possible. But the U.S. and the other NATO powers have not done much stepping back to date, we are well to remind ourselves.

M.K. Bhadrakumar, the former Indian diplomat who publishes the consistently thoughtful *Indian Punchline* newsletter, put out a piece Monday, Sept. 16, arguing that the Anglo–American powers are turning the proxy war in Ukraine into Russian roulette.

Here is part of Bhadrakumar’s reasoning. Storm Shadows are the missiles Starmer would allow Kiev to fire into Russia if the Biden regime approves of the plan:

“Moscow anticipates that the U.S.–U.K. ploy may be to test the waters by first (openly) using Britain’s Storm Shadow long-range air-launched cruise missile, which has already been supplied to Ukraine. On Friday, Russia expelled six British diplomats assigned to the Moscow embassy in a clear warning that U.K.–Russia ties will be affected. Russia has already warned the U.K. of severe consequences if the Storm Shadow were to be used to hit Russian territory.

What makes the developing situation extremely dangerous is that the cat-and-mouse game so far about NATO’s covert involvement in the Ukraine war is giving way to a game of Russian roulette that follows the laws of Probability Theory.”

Bhadrakumar has this exactly right, in my view, but with one minor flaw in his argument. The Americans and the Brits can be said to be playing, unserious as they are, but the Russians are not.

Patrick Lawrence, a correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the *International Herald Tribune*, is a columnist, essayist, lecturer and author, most recently of *Journalists and Their Shadows*, available from Clarity Press or via Amazon. Other books include *Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century*. His Twitter account, @thefloutist, has been permanently censored.

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Lawrence