

"Most Progressive Dem Platform in History" Hawkish on Foreign Policy

The [Democratic Party platform](#) may indeed be, as some have proclaimed, the “most progressive” in the history of the party—at least on various important domestic issues. But some of its foreign policy planks reflect a disturbingly hawkish worldview consistent with those of Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.



Image by Joeff Davis

Declaring that “we must defeat ISIS, al-Qaeda and their affiliates,” **the platform calls for the United States and its allies to “destroy ISIS” strongholds in Iraq and Syria. There is no acknowledgement that these strongholds are in heavily populated urban areas, thereby risking large-scale civilian casualties,** and no mention that the rise of these extremist organizations are a direct consequence of previous U.S. military interventions in the region.

Regarding Iran, while there are many legitimate criticisms of that country’s reactionary regime, the platform appears to go overboard with its accusations, such as the claim that “Iran is the leading state sponsor of terrorism.” Many analysts would give that designation to Saudi Arabia, with whom the platform says the U.S. should “strengthen its security cooperation.”

It also says the party will “push back” against Iran’s “support for terrorist groups like Hamas.” While there was a brief period of some limited past Iranian support of that Palestinian Islamist organization, there is no apparent evidence that it continues. Indeed, there are major tensions between Hamas and Iran, including support for opposite sides in the Syrian civil war. (By contrast, there is fair amount of evidence that Qatar—a U.S. ally—does provide support for Hamas, but there is no mention of that.)

It also portrays some of the bizarre statements of former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—such as his denial of the Nazi genocide against the Jews—as current government policy. (Interestingly, there is nothing in the platform regarding the ongoing denial by Turkey of the Ottomans’ genocide of the Armenians.)

The platform insists that Iran “has its fingerprints on almost every conflict in the Middle East,” ignoring the fact that in regard to the important conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran is on the same side as the United States.

Most disturbingly, while endorsing the United Nations-backed seven-party nuclear agreement, the platform claims that the party “will not hesitate to take military action if Iran violates the agreement.” Such a unilateral attack would constitute a direct violation of the U.N. Charter.

The Democrats are taking the position that the United States and its allies (Israel, Pakistan, and India) somehow have the right to maintain their nuclear monopoly in the region, but that any non-allied country that seeks to develop the technological infrastructure to potentially challenge this monopoly should be attacked.

Perhaps the most disappointing plank in the platform is in regard to Israel and Palestine.

Clinton and her representatives in the platform committee defeated a measure calling for an end of Israel's occupation and illegal settlements. Indeed, the platform pegs challenges to the occupation and settlements by the United Nations and others as efforts to "delegitimize Israel." This is particularly problematic language since, under Clinton's leadership, the State Department formally listed efforts to "delegitimize" Israel as part of its [definition of anti-Semitism](#).

And rather than saying Israel should have a strong enough military to defend itself from potential adversaries, it instead insists that Israel be provided a "qualitatively military edge."

And even though the Obama administration—like all previous administrations—refused to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital until the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved, **the platform states that Jerusalem "should remain the capital of Israel."** It says nothing about Palestinian aspirations that it serve as the capital of their country as well.

In addition, stating that Jerusalem *remain* "accessible to people of all faiths" ignores the fact that Israeli occupation authorities have made it is extremely difficult for Muslim and Christian Palestinians in the West Bank to have access to the holy sites in the Old City and impossible for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The platform praises Israel's supposed "democracy, equality, tolerance, and pluralism"—which would be news for the country's Palestinian minority and those Palestinians living under direct military occupation or in forced exile. **It calls on the Palestinians to negotiate an agreement that "guarantees Israel's future" as a "Jewish state," making it the world's first peace treaty in which one party is obliged to recognize another country's ethnic or religious identity over that of others.**

Whatever the problems with the Democrat's foreign policy planks, the [Republican platform](#) is far worse. To give but a few examples: the Republicans call for dramatic increases in the already-bloated military budget; insist on abrogating the Iran nuclear deal; make no mention of Palestinian rights; and declare "We reject the false notion that Israel is an occupier."

It is still disappointing, however, that—despite polls showing the Democrats and independents are more progressive on foreign policy issues than at any time in recent history—the Democratic Party platform skews so far to the right.

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