



## A Sane Alternative to Trump: Hillary has yet to Define her Nomination

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After scrambling to unite her Democratic Party at the outset of the convention in Philadelphia last week, presidential nominee Hillary Clinton rolled out her national campaign strategy on July 28, signaling a progressive domestic agenda while keeping her foreign policy cards close to her chest. However, beyond the strong plausible speech, Hillary did not define the rationale of her nomination or explain what kind of a leader she would become if elected.

In officially accepting her nomination last Thursday, Hillary was indeed able to reintroduce herself to the American people and present the image of a steady leader who stands as a contrast to her Republican opponent Donald Trump. Even though she might have improved her favorable ratings, Clinton did not put to rest questions about her credibility nor the skepticism surrounding her potential hawkish foreign policy doctrine, if elected president. There was no attempt whatsoever during the convention to defend, or boast about, her record as Secretary of State running a pillar of US bureaucracy as well as no reference understandably to her use of a private email server during that period. Yet, the whole rationale of her candidacy has been framed by these lingering issues, in particular how she handled the September 2012 attack on the US consulate in Benghazi.

### How Hillary Plans to Win

While Senator Bernie Sanders and his delegates dominated the focus of the first two days of the convention and the strong endorsement of President Barack Obama headlined the third, Hillary put her own stamp on the convention's last day leading to the high point of her anticipated speech. The selection of speakers on that day shows how the Hillary campaign is aiming to update the coalition that won the presidential race for President Barack Obama both in 2008 and 2012.

While Hillary has a significant advantage among all minority voters, in particular African Americans and Latinos, there are still doubts around her ability to entice the millennials to vote, even though she has recently adopted Sanders' plan to curb the burden of college students' loans. In addition to the 40 million American eligible voters with disabilities, Clinton also reached out to independents and moderate Republicans, by respectively having as speakers former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Doug Elmets who served in the administration of former President Ronald Reagan. As expected, the list of speakers on July 28 were governors or members of Congress from key swing states like Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan as Hillary tries to balance the White vote in suburban areas going mostly to Trump.

Hillary's convention [speech](#) can be divided into five categories: 1) making the case for the Democratic party's unity; 2) highlighting the theme of her campaign "stronger together" as a contrast to Trump's "I alone can fix it" approach; 3) retelling her life story and major achievements; 4) laying out her domestic progressive agenda, including the highly liberal promise of "the biggest investment in new good paying jobs since World War II"; and 5) attacking Trump's business record.

However, the speech had only two foreign policy arguments. First, Trump does not offer the “steady leadership” the world needs. “Imagine him in the Oval Office facing a real crisis,” she noted. Second, Hillary took ownership of the Iran nuclear deal while reiterating the need to enforce the agreement and “keep supporting Israel’s security.” Three other global issues were briefly mentioned: enforcing the global climate agreement, defeating the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and upholding US commitment to defend NATO members from any threats.

Interestingly, in the 2016 campaign, Democrats became the party of the military as Trump continues to offend war heroes and talk about a dysfunctional Pentagon. Standing on stage along with fellow retired military officials, General John Allen gave a hawkish face and voice to a Clinton foreign policy ready to project American power around the world, while the reality is that the US continues to have a diminishing influence. Allen assured friends and partners that “America will not abandon you,” while the message to the enemies was “you will fear us” and to ISIL “we will defeat you.”

Except for her clear anti-Russian stance that began to evolve soon after the convention to double down on Trump’s Moscow-friendly rhetoric, Hillary did not provide any indication about her foreign policy in her speech. However, others did. One of Hillary’s advisers, Jeremy Bash, [told](#) The Telegraph during the DNC convention that if elected Hillary will order “a full review” of US policy in Syria. Another Clinton ally, former US diplomat Jamie Rubin, hinted that a Clinton administration will not be constrained in its foreign policy as the Obama administration was. All the messages at the mid-level campaign staff, in recent weeks and months, are pointing to a hawkish policy that will likely revert to a more traditional US approach to global challenges, mainly in the Middle East.

For now, Clinton is focused on winning the national elections. While Trump is having a bad week with the fallout of his [feud](#) with Khizr Khan, the father of the slain Muslim American soldier, and his strange remarks [inviting](#) Russia to hack the Democratic party’s email, Clinton had a good bounce in post-convention polls. According to [Reuters](#), Clinton has now a 6-percentage-point lead over Trump, however 25 percent of eligible voters remain undecided and favored “other” in the poll. With Trump leading an aggressive campaign against most minority voters, Clinton’s main challenge is to secure a decent show among White voters and make sure minority voters actually go to the polls.

However, Hillary’s far-reaching attempt to appeal to both progressives and independents/moderate Republicans is complicating her already weak campaign message. Beyond presenting herself as a sane alternative to Trump, Clinton did not offer a viable rationale for her presidency. Yet, as the past few days have demonstrated, Clinton’s most crucial asset in this election remains simply having Trump as an opponent.