# 2022 Midterms DA

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### 1NC Midterms

#### GOP is poised to win the midterms

Jason Lemon June 2, 2022, “Republicans' Chances of Beating Democrats for Control of Senate in Midterms,” NEWSWEEK, <https://www.newsweek.com/republicans-chances-flipping-senate-democratic-control-midterms-1712378>

Overall, polling shows Republicans are favored to perform well in the midterms. A CNN/SSRS Opinion Panel carried out from May 3 to 5 showed that 49 percent of registered voters said they'd vote for a generic Republican candidate if the election were held today. Just 42 percent said they'd cast ballots for generic Democratic candidates—giving the GOP a 7-point advantage. Meanwhile, the Real Clear Politics average of recent generic congressional ballot polls currently has the GOP in the lead by 1.9 percent.

Recent historical precedent also suggests that one or both congressional chambers are likely to flip to Republican control. Last June, the University of Virginia's Center for Politics released an analysis of midterms going back to 1946. That report showed that the president's party has lost more than three Senate seats, on average, during the midterms. The biggest loss has been 13 seats, while the largest gain has been just four seats.

#### NATO cooperation is a rally point for Dem voters in November

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The war in Ukraine has unsettled American politics. The degree to which it is changing American politics is the more consequential question for President Biden and the Democrats.

Russia’s brutal and unprovoked aggression against its sovereign neighbor has refocused the world. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has become a figure of international acclaim and admiration. Russian President Vladimir Putin has become an international pariah. NATO has been rejuvenated and the United States is once again leading the Western alliance.

How much does that matter to American voters and how much will it matter in the November midterm elections? Today, inflation and other domestic issues remain the main drivers of the upcoming elections. One change the war has brought is that it has frozen the political environment at home and placed some issues — gas prices specifically — into a more-than-purely-domestic context.

We know from scatterings of recent history that at this stage of a conflict like the one that continues to unfold in Ukraine, projections months into the future are risky to foolhardy. Surprise is one certainty of politics.

Wars that directly involve U.S. forces often produce a rallying effect for the president. When the United States launched a war in early 1991 to eject Iraq from Kuwait, President George H.W. Bush saw his approval ratings soar to close to 90 percent. Two years later, he had lost his bid for reelection and was out of office.

After the United States responded strongly to the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, President George W. Bush’s approval ratings slightly eclipsed his father’s levels. Republican candidates rode his anti-terrorism message to a successful midterm election the following year. Views about the war in Iraq had not shifted enough to prevent Bush from winning reelection in 2004, but by 2006, opposition to the war contributed heavily to the Democrats’ takeover of the House.

This war is different. Biden has built and led an international coalition that has slapped punitive sanctions on Russia and come to the aid of Ukraine with continuous shipments of weapons and open doors to now millions of refugees fleeing the destruction. He has called Putin a war criminal but has resisted steps that he says could lead to a wider war. No U.S. troops have been committed, and Biden has said that will not change. Still, Putin is unpredictable, and so, too, could be the course of the conflict and possible ways it ends.

The war in Ukraine has brought Americans closer together on some things; call it the Putin effect. At a time of division at home, Putin has given Americans a common enemy and a sense of collective purpose. Big majorities of Republicans and of Democrats believe that cooperation with U.S. allies is the right posture, according to the Pew Research Center. A similar pattern emerges on the decision to impose sanctions on Russia, with more than 8 in 10 in each party supporting the continuation of those measures.

#### Biden’s moves associated with Ukraine can reverse momentum in the midterms

David Lauter ’22, March 11, Senior Editor, “Essential Politics: War in Ukraine scrambles GOP and Democratic strategies for midterms,” LOS ANGELES TIMES, https://www.latimes.com/politics/newsletter/2022-03-11/politics-war-ukraine-scrambles-plans-2022-midterm-election-essential-politics

The domestic political impact of the war in Ukraine — now in its third week — has scrambled the two parties’ strategies going into this year’s midterm elections. Both have started to maneuver for advantage.

No one knows whether either side will benefit come November — a lot depends on how voters end up perceiving the war’s course.

But for President Biden and the Democrats, who have been tracking toward a significant defeat, attention to a foreign crisis could provide a badly needed shakeup of the campaign debate.

An overwhelming issue

“As a general rule, Americans don’t vote on foreign policy unless American men and women are dying in a war, but we’ve rarely had an international event not involving the United States directly that has so totally consumed our news and attention as the Russian invasion of Ukraine,” said Republican pollster and strategist Whit Ayres.

“This war has become symbolic for the survival of democratic regimes against authoritarian dictatorships,” Ayres added. “That symbolism has given it a much broader meaning.”

A poll this week by Navigator Research, a Democratic firm, found that 37% of American voters said they were “very closely” following news from Ukraine, and nearly 8 in 10 said they were following it at least somewhat closely — high numbers for a foreign issue.

National security and foreign policy had jumped to the top of American concerns, tied with jobs and the economy, displacing worries about the coronavirus and inflation, the poll found.

Amid that intense focus, Americans have clearly picked a side — overwhelmingly favoring the Ukrainians. That could be seen in Wednesday’s House vote to suspend oil imports from Russia, which passed 414-17 with just two of the chamber’s most left-wing Democrats, Reps. Cori Bush of Missouri and Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, and 15 right-wing Republicans voting no.

That level of attention makes the Ukraine war the kind of event that could significantly shift U.S. politics.

“Politics isn’t the most important thing right now,” said Democratic strategist Steve Schale, chief executive of the pro-Biden super-pac Unite the Country.

But, he added, since 1992, “the only two midterm elections that were not absolute debacles for the incumbent president’s party were held during a window where there was something significant in the country that reshaped the conversation.”

Those two were 1998, when voters rejected Republican efforts to impeach President Clinton and Democrats gained four seats, and 2002, when Republicans under President George W. Bush gained seats in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

Biden and the Democrats have a long way to go to emulate the midterm successes those two presidents enjoyed. A new Wall Street Journal poll released Friday continues to show Democrats trailing the GOP as the party voters say they expect to back in November.

But polls have also shown an uptick in voters’ assessments of how Biden is doing his job. The change is just a few percentage points, but after nine months of nearly steady decline, it’s a welcome sign for the president.

Ukraine has clearly contributed to the boost in Biden’s ratings. A poll by Morning Consult for Politico found this week, for example, that by 46% to 42%, voters approved of Biden’s response to the crisis.

Voters’ assessments of how Biden has dealt with Ukraine have improved notably since last month and are also significantly higher than how they assess his presidency overall.

The shift comes primarily from Democrats and independents; Republicans mostly remain highly critical of Biden. The Navigator poll, however, did identify a slice of Republicans, mostly moderately conservative men, who approve of Biden on Ukraine even as they disapprove of his performance otherwise.

In any case, winning back wavering partisans and independent voters is a key task for Biden right now, one that could be critical in the small number of swing House districts and Senate elections in which the midterms will be most intensely contested.

If voters continue to approve of Biden’s response, it could help with one of his key problems — the perception by many Americans that he’s not a strong leader.

#### GOP control allows Afghanistan reinvasion

Hunter Wallace September 8, 2021, “Moving Forward,” OCCIDENTAL DISSENT, <http://occidentaldissent.com/2021/09/08/moving-forward-2/>

What does that mean though? Assuming the GOP returns to power in Congress, what will it do with that power? What can we expect from having Mitch McConnell and Kevin McCarthy in power again in Washington? What will they do about anything? It is also becoming increasingly clear that Donald Trump intends to run again in 2024. Blumpf: Season Two will be reinvading Afghanistan to own the libs.

It has been sickening to watch these people for the last three weeks because it has revealed that they have no intention of changing anything. It will be back to corporate tax cuts and deregulation. It will be back to surges and troop deployments and warmongering to restore the “credibility” of the American Empire. It will be back to “rebuilding our military” which sees us as its “domestic enemy.” They will carry water for the “intelligence community” and shill for its agenda to own the libs. Above all else, we will return to endless grifting and backlash politics and giving these people power so that they can explain to us that there is nothing that they can do about anything for deep philosophical reasons like Gov. Kristi Noem.

#### Reinvasion checks China and Russia – key to hegemony and international liberal order

Asim Kashgarian October 27, 2021, “China, Russia Working Together on Security Threats in Central Asia,” VOA NEWS, https://www.voanews.com/a/china-russia-working-together-on-security-threats-in-central-asia/6288233.html

Beijing's and Moscow’s security agendas are complementary, according to Cooley, and can be mutually accommodated because each views the region as key to its own security, and neither wishes for the United States to return.

“Russia is concerned about potential instability on Central Asian borders, maintaining security cooperation with the Central Asian states and curbing the influx of refugees into Eurasia,” Cooley told VOA. “China is primarily concerned with ensuring that the Taliban clamp down on Uyghur groups residing near the border and securing the Afghan and Tajik borders with Xinjiang.”

Russia may not be happy, though, Cooley said, about China’s recently increased security footprint in Central Asia — including the military facility in Tajikistan, expanded military exercises with the Central Asian states, surveillance technologies “transferred” to Central Asian cities and increased activities by Chinese private security companies to help protect Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure projects.

“But the two countries have every reason to reject talk of ‘competition’ and emphasize their joint opposition to U.S. hegemony and the U.S.-led liberal international order,” Cooley underscored.

#### U.S.-led world order solves climate and avoid war – existential risks

Hans-Georg Betz November 3, 2021, “Uncertain Times in a World Without American Hegemony,” FAIR OBSERVER, https://www.fairobserver.com/region/north\_america/hans-georg-betz-international-order-great-powers-american-hegemony-china-news-12512/

Three decades later, the world is in disarray. The attacks of September 11 were a drastic reminder that not everybody was sold on Fukuyama’s utopia. The financial crisis that followed the collapse of Lehman Brothers and, with it, the house of cards built on a derivatives market that had spun out of control exposed the irrationality of rational behavior — taking more and more risks simply because everybody else did so. Finally, COVID-19 has demonstrated how quickly the beautiful world of ever-expanding consumer choices, sustained by cheap labor in remote parts of the world, can grind to a screeching halt.

Benign Hegemon

It is too early to tell whether or not global turbulences have reached a point of no return. The prospects are not great, and that has a lot to do with the United States. There is a strong sense that America’s hegemonic position, which it assumed after World War II, is on the wane and, with it, the country’s “commitment to promoting a liberal international order.” Or, perhaps, the United States suffers from a severe case of “leadership fatigue” and no longer wants to play the role of the “benign hegemon.”

The notion of the benign hegemon is derived from hegemonic stability theory, popular among some experts in international relations. The theory posits that order and stability in world affairs crucially depend on a Great Power capable of sustaining them and willing to do so. As Stephen Kobrin, of the Wharton School, has recently put it, “A stable, open economy requires a hegemon, a dominant power who can provide some of the necessary public goods, absorb costs, and order the system.”

Although this pertains particularly to international economic relations, it can be applied to other areas, such as international security. Order and stability require, among other things, that the hegemonic power formulate and underwrite the rules that define and govern the interactions between states in the international system. This was the case in the second half of the 19th century when Great Britain assumed this role, providing and guaranteeing global public goods such as free trade, capital mobility and the British pound, backed up by the gold standard, as the global reserve currency.

The system came to an end with World War I. The conflict left Britain weakened and largely unable to reassume its prewar role. The interwar period was characterized by turmoil and crises, paving the way for the rise of autocratic regimes, committed to establishing a new order on the ruins of the old one. They accomplished the latter, but the new order was not theirs to create. The new hegemonic power that emerged from the war was not Hitler’s Germany but the United States, which filled the void left by an exhausted Great Britain.

This was anything but a natural transition. In fact, for most of the interwar period, the United States had refused to get entangled in international affairs. America’s retreat from internationalism after World War I was epitomized by Congress’s refusal to join the League of Nations — and that despite the fact that the league had been the brainchild of US President Woodrow Wilson.

Isolationism went hand in hand with protectionism. Throughout the 19th century and way into the beginning of the 20th, the United States boasted some of the highest tariffs in the world. The culmination was the infamous Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which had a devastating impact on international trade and contributed to the Great Depression. It was not until the United States entered the war against Nazi Germany that it assumed the role commensurate to its position as the economically and militarily by far strongest power in the world.

Alternative Options

The failure of the most recent G20 meeting in Rome to arrive at a meaningful common position on global warming and climate change ahead of the COP26 in Glasgow is further proof that the United States is no longer in a position to fill this role. Instead of leading, President Joe Biden blamed China and Russia “for any disappointment over the level of commitment by G20 leaders to fight climate change.” This is not to deny that Biden has a point. But given the enormity of the impact climate change is bound to have on the natural environment and life on this planet, it is little more than an exercise in passing responsibility.

Biden’s remark, however, does address a serious issue, namely the role of China in a rapidly changing world. A few weeks ago, Chinese coal production reached new historic highs, amounting to an estimated 4 billion tons for this year. Accelerated coal production is supposed to alleviate energy shortages that have threatened to slow down the country’s growth. Unfortunately, emissions-wise, coal happens to be one of the worst sources of energy.

A new study on the impact of carbon dioxide emissions on coastal areas predicts catastrophic devastation as a result of rising sea levels for some of the world’s megacities, particularly in India, Indonesia, Vietnam and China — all major coal consumers. Given the concentration of China’s population in a string of coastal cities, one might assume that it has a particular interest in combating climate change. In theory, this would entail an active involvement in global governance, a proposition that China has been more than reluctant to embrace, presumably because it would entail directly challenging the United States.

At the same time, however, China has launched major initiatives, such as the foundation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and particularly the One Belt, One Road initiative. Together with China’s massive engagement in Africa, these projects leave the impression that they are part of a comprehensive drive designed to establish China as an alternative to the United States.

This might herald the emergence of a new system, no longer dominated by one power but multipolar, and certainly very different from the one established after World War II. For, as Princeton’s John Ikenberry has noted a few years ago, “there is no liberal internationalism without American and western hegemony — and that age is ending.” With the decline of the United States and the parallel rise of China, countries have the option to “seek alternative patrons rather than remain dependent on Western largess and support.”

The end result might very well be a bifurcated world order, on the heels of a period of instability and turmoil, or what Ian Bremmer and Nouriel Roubini have called a “G-Zero” world, one without clear leadership and global cooperation. Bifurcation means the coexistence of competing systems that follow fundamentally different rules. This can already be observed in the realm of economic governance.

Olga Petricevic and David Teece have recently warned of a “noticeable defiance of the principles of classical economic liberalism and the rule-of-law” by Russia and China. The Chinese “alternative model of governance,” they note, “is deploying coordinated protectionist trade and investment policies and government intervention aimed at accessing and acquiring foreign intellectual property, thereby influencing the global economic and innovation system.” Its success is likely to inspire imitation and attempts to jump on the bandwagon, resulting not only in bifurcation but in polarization reminiscent of the Cold War period.

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### GOP YES

#### GOP will win over swing voters – that tips the election in their favor

Alan Greenblatt May 27, 2022, “You Don't Need to Be a Fortune Teller: Signs Point to GOP Sweep This Year,” GOVERNING, <https://www.governing.com/now/you-dont-need-to-be-a-fortune-teller-signs-point-to-gop-sweep-this-year>

But culture war issues motivate the party’s base. And, to appeal to swing voters, Republicans have plenty of other clubs with which to beat Biden and the Democrats. Maybe you’ve already heard this, but inflation has jumped the most in four decades. Gas prices, already at a retail average of $4.60 per gallon, may well go higher with summer travel demand — perhaps as high as $6. Homicides have increased dramatically since 2019, fueling a return to “tough on crime” rhetoric among Republicans.

It's all easy fodder for an opposition party to run on. Polls indicate that voters trust the GOP more, by significant margins, when it comes to inflation and the economy in general. Republicans are enjoying their biggest advantage regarding the crime issue in decades.

All of this is reflected in how partisans are responding. The gap between the numbers of Democrats and Republicans retiring from Congress is the highest it’s been in decades. At the legislative level, Republicans are leaving fewer seats open than Democrats.

Republicans raised $170 million from January to March through WinRed, an online fundraising platform. That still lags the Democrats’ ActBlue, which has traditionally been much more robust, but represents nearly a one-quarter jump for WinRed over the same period in 2020. The Republican Governors Association raised $33 million in the first quarter of the year, which was nearly $10 million more than the Democratic Governors Association. The Republican State Leadership Committee brought in just over $10 million, compared with $6.5 million for the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee.

Who Will Turn Out?

In the end, voter behavior matters most of all. Again, the GOP has a big advantage.

A slew of polls have showed large and indeed growing gaps in terms of levels of enthusiasm about voting this year between Republicans and Democrats. But we don’t have to rely strictly on polls any more. We’re still relatively early in the primary season, but Republicans are showing up in ways that Democrats are not.

In the first 10 states to hold primaries this year, Republicans received 61 percent of the total vote, according to an analysis by GOP pollster John Couvillon. The party generating more enthusiasm in primaries has fared quite well in the last few midterms. Democrats received 54 percent of the primary vote in 2018 — a solid midterm year for them — while Republicans got 55 percent in both 2010 and 2014, landslide years for the party.

It’s true that primary turnout isn’t a perfect measure, since not all races are equally competitive. On Tuesday, for example, Stacey Abrams was unopposed for the Democratic nomination for governor of Georgia, while GOP Gov. Brian Kemp faced a contentious, if ultimately easy, contest against former Sen. David Perdue. Turnout on the GOP side increased by a half-million votes, compared to the 2018 primary.

But looking at the total picture, it’s clear more Republicans are turning out. A lot more Republicans. Overall Republican primary turnout is up 32 percent, while Democratic turnout has actually declined 3 percent.

All this paints a pretty grim picture for Democrats. They’re running behind on the issues that concern voters most. Their leader is losing support among key constituencies. Their potential candidates are less likely to run, while their voters are less likely to turn out.

It’s clear that Republicans will be stronger at the end of the year than they are now. It’s not yet possible to say how much stronger, but if anyone offers to bet you Democrats will retain power in Congress, take their money. At the state level, GOP victories may not be as momentous, but that’s only because they already hold majorities among governors, legislators and legislative chambers.

For Republicans, it’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas will fall early this year, on Nov. 8.

#### Dems are set to lose because of Biden

Alan Greenblatt May 27, 2022, “You Don't Need to Be a Fortune Teller: Signs Point to GOP Sweep This Year,” GOVERNING, <https://www.governing.com/now/you-dont-need-to-be-a-fortune-teller-signs-point-to-gop-sweep-this-year>

The main reason isn’t hard to suss out. Every president can count on his party losing seats in midterms, but President Biden’s approval ratings are particularly bad. On average, 41 percent of Americans approve of the job he’s doing, compared with 54 percent who disapprove. “That is one of the lowest marks of any president since World War II,” says Henry Olsen, a conservative analyst at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. “Unless that changes, I would expect a solid Democratic defeat.”

Granted, President Donald Trump’s approval ratings were similarly bargain basement in 2018 — but then, Republicans lost control of the House that year, along with seven governorships. The more important comparison, at any rate, is not with Trump but with Biden himself. Biden won the presidency in 2020 by 4.5 points. If he’s down 13, that represents a huge drop in support, which seriously imperils his party.

Swing voters have swung hard against Biden. His net approval rating among independents is roughly minus 20. That’s a group he carried in 2020 by 13 points, according to exit polls.

We’ve already witnessed a demonstration of how the president’s numbers can drag down other Democrats. Last November, Biden’s net disapproval numbers were 12.5 percent points lower than his victory margin in 2020. Guess what? The swing from Biden’s share of the vote to that won in 2020 by the Democratic candidates for governor was 12 points. Gov. Phil Murphy managed barely to hold on in New Jersey, but Democrat Terry McAuliffe lost the governorship to Republican Glenn Youngkin in Virginia — a state Biden had carried a year earlier by 10 points.

Now, Biden’s numbers are even lower than they were back in November. This means any Democrat who won their last election by less than double-digit margins should be nervous. That certainly includes vulnerable governors such as Tony Evers of Wisconsin and Laura Kelly of Kansas.

“The president’s dismal ratings are what people care about the most,” says GOP consultant David Carney. “It could be a bloodbath up and down the ballot, from the school board to Congress."

#### Biden has lost the middle – this undermines Dems’ chances

Alan Greenblatt May 27, 2022, “You Don't Need to Be a Fortune Teller: Signs Point to GOP Sweep This Year,” GOVERNING, <https://www.governing.com/now/you-dont-need-to-be-a-fortune-teller-signs-point-to-gop-sweep-this-year>

Biden’s old boss, Barack Obama, put together a winning coalition during his presidency, combining college-educated whites with young, Black and Latino voters. The danger for Democrats is that Biden appears to be unraveling that coalition. About the only groups still solidly in his camp are dedicated members of the Democratic base, such as Black voters and college-educated women.

Biden carried close to two-thirds of Hispanic voters in 2020, but their shift toward Trump, compared to 2016, was notable, especially in states such as Florida and Texas. In the Texas primaries in March this year, participation in GOP primaries was up dramatically in heavily Hispanic portions of South Texas that traditionally have been overwhelmingly Democratic.

An NPR/Marist poll released last month found that 52 percent of Latinos say they’re more likely to support Republican candidates for Congress; just 39 percent favor Democrats.

Young voters have been a particular problem for Biden. Voters under 30 favored Biden over Trump, 60 percent to 39 percent, in 2020, but they’ve soured on him since. Biden’s approval rating among young voters has dropped by 18 points over the past year, according to a Harvard Institute of Politics poll – which is in line with what other pollsters are finding.

Even as Democrats shed support among Latinos, young voters and parents, the party’s longstanding problem with working-class white voters continues to worsen. The April NPR/Marist poll found Democrats are only favored by a third of white voters without college degrees, compared to 55 percent who say they are likely to support Republicans.

“The people who are left backing Biden are the people who would back any Democrat under anything except extreme circumstances,” Olsen says. “That’s a terrible place to be in for an election. You’ve lost America’s middle.”

#### GOP win is likely

Daniel Pletka June 2, 2022, distinguished senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, “The Republicans Could Win the U.S. Midterms. Here’s What that Means for the World,” FOREIGN POLICY, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/02/gop-congress-midterms-foreign-policy-ukraine-taiwan/

Was the Ukraine vote a harbinger of Republican national security squabbles to come? Was it a partisan vote against anything associated with President Joe Biden? Or was it a one-off reflecting a poorly drafted bill with too much extraneous baggage? More importantly, who will hold the foreign-policy reins in the likely Republican House (and possibly Senate) majority to come in 2023—the isolationists or the internationalists?

Political pundits agree Republicans are likely to win back the House of Representatives and have a good shot at the Senate in the November 2022 midterm elections. That could—caucus permitting—propel House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy to the speakership and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell to the post of majority leader. Of the two, McConnell is the known quantity—an experienced legislator and parliamentarian and an old-school internationalist whose foreign-policy views were forged in the crucible of the Cold War. McCarthy, not so much. Indeed, it’s probably most accurate to say his foreign policy was forged in the crucible of former President Donald Trump.

As previous Republican speakers have learned to their displeasure, the Republican Party in today’s House is less a caucus and more a raucous battle for primacy. Former Speaker John Boehner struggled against rebellious Tea Party upstarts, his successor Paul Ryan struggled against the self-named Freedom Caucus, and McCarthy is unlikely to have much fun either. In the minority, the Republican Party tends—emphasis intended—to stand together because the Democratic speaker and the executive in the White House are deemed public enemies No. 1 and No. 2. But with the majority comes the battle to control the agenda.

#### GOP is likely to take the midterms but Dems can still hold on

Andrew Prokop April 26, 2022, “Why Republicans are favored to win the Senate — and how Democrats could stop them,” VOX, https://www.vox.com/23030164/senate-2022-midterm-elections-battlegrounds

Democrats’ control of the 50-50 Senate could well be washed away by a red wave in this fall’s midterm elections.

Republicans appear favored to win back the Senate for two simple reasons. First, the national environment has moved in their favor. Biden’s approval rating is low. The GOP has improved in generic ballot polls and won the governor’s seat in Virginia last November.

Second, the Senate is already split 50-50, so a net gain of even just one seat for Republicans would flip the chamber into their hands.

However, Democrats do still have a way to hold on. The main thing they have going for them is a decent map — they aren’t defending any seats in states Trump won in 2020, while Republicans are defending two states Biden narrowly won. If Democrats manage to hold their losses to a minimum, or make up for them by defeating Republicans elsewhere, they could keep Senate control. But if the national environment keeps looking so dire for the party and the president, that would be a tall order.

### A2 GOP momentum overwhelms the link

#### GOP could still blow it

Douglas MacKinnon April 23, 2022, a political and communications consultant, was a writer in the White House for Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, and former special assistant for policy and communications at the Pentagon during the last three years of the Bush administration, “Republicans are more than capable of blowing the 2022 midterms,” THE HILL, https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/3276053-republicans-are-more-than-capable-of-blowing-the-2022-midterms/

If you don’t believe the Republicans can blow their chances of winning majorities in the House and Senate midterms this year, then you have not paid attention to the past five years of U.S. politics.

At least three factors could reverse the predicted fortune for the GOP. The first would be voter apathy by traditional Republicans, conservatives and people of faith. The second would be — drum roll, please — potential fallout from anything Donald Trump says, does or hints. And the third would be a full-court press by Democrats, aided by some in the mainstream media, to come across as suddenly moderate while metaphorically throwing Joe Biden and Kamala Harris as far overboard as possible.

All three factors will happen to some extent. The question is, will some combination of them be enough to hold the Democratic majority in Congress after November?

Apparently Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell’s (R-Ky.) main strategy for winning is to avoid mentioning anything that Republicans would do if they regained majority control.

The quote sometimes attributed to Napoleon — “Never interfere with an enemy while he’s in the process of destroying himself” — makes sense if one believes the Democrats are failing across the board, but many Republican voters who have been burned before by the GOP leadership still want to hear a plan.

Polls indicate a red wave in November. Maybe so, but what if a substantial number of Republican voters adopt the unyielding position of “Fool me 10 times, shame on you. Try to fool me again and I’m not going to vote.”

Impossible? Trump’s election to the White House in 2016 should remind us all to expect the unexpected. McConnell and other entrenched elites of the Republican Party may think the party’s more traditional voting bloc will never desert them, but they rarely walk in the shoes of working-class Republicans who, like everyone else, are feeling the brutal effects of the pandemic topped by skyrocketing inflation.

Just like the entrenched Democratic Party elites, these Republicans live in a bubble of favors, luxury, security, wealth and gold-plated health care plans. They’re used to extravagant fundraisers, five-star resorts and the vacation homes of billionaire donors.

As the election draws nearer, we can assume that many of these voters who have been taken for granted by party leaders will have reached their saturation point regarding empty promises. Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.), who chairs the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC), spoke directly to the frustration of conservative voters when he released his “11-Point Plan to Rescue America.”

Some believe the plan needed more editing and was released too soon, but its “rally around conservative principles” theme, much of it echoed by Trump, managed to elicit the wrath of McConnell and the small army of consultants who are loyal to him. In response to that noise, NRSC communications director and Scott campaign aide Chris Hartline said: “We don’t spend much time worrying about criticisms from anonymous Republican consultants who lost the Senate last cycle and who have gotten rich off maintaining the status quo.”

Indeed, the “McConnell wing” of the GOP might be shocked by how many “traditional” voters stay home in November if they don’t start seeing conservative planks actually nailed into the foundation of the party.

Next, regarding Trump, as Republicans have witnessed the past few years: “The Don giveth, but the Don also taketh away — big time.” Will Trump’s cult of personality bring more Republicans and independents into the voting booth, or will it drive them away (as he did in the 2020 Georgia runoff election and Arizona’s general election by bashing Georgia Republicans, the voting process and the memory of the late John McCain)?

And then we come to what the Democrats can do to try to salvage victory. Some candidates, of course, will try to put as much distance as possible between them and the Biden administration’s failing policies. Biden is flirting with the lowest approval ratings in history, and some see Harris as more out of touch with each passing day.

The unintended consequences of antitrust legislation

For a more stable US workforce, pregnant workers need stronger protection

If calling out Biden and Harris, or making fun of them — as we saw with the viral video in which Biden turned to shake hands with an invisible person and with “Saturday Night Live” mocking Harris — can save the Democrats’ majority in Congress, you can bet that more liberal pundits and others will be willing to do so as the midterms approach.

Will the Democrats defy the odds and pull off an upset this fall? With 28 weeks to go, it would be delusional to think that a Republican victory is fait accompli.

#### GOP is highly favored but it’s not a sure thing

Jordain Carney April 12, 2022, “McConnell: ‘Actually possible’ for GOP to screw up midterms with ‘unacceptable’ candidates,” THE HILL, <https://thehill.com/news/senate/3265655-mcconnell-actually-possible-for-gop-to-screw-up-midterms-with-unacceptable-candidates/>

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) on Tuesday said the political atmosphere is good for Republicans heading into the midterms but warned that the party could bungle its chances if “unacceptable” candidates win their primaries but go on to lose in November.

Republicans are feeling optimistic about their chances to win back the Senate, but they face several messy primaries that could have ramifications for the general election map and the GOP’s chances of picking up, or holding on to, a seat.

McConnell, speaking at a chamber event in Kentucky, said that 1994 had been the best year for Republicans and that the atmosphere heading into November “is better than it was in 1994.”

“From an atmospheric point of view, it’s a perfect storm of problems for the Democrats,” McConnell said. “How could you screw this up? It’s actually possible. And we’ve had some experience with that in the past.”

“In the Senate, if you look at where we have to compete in order to get into a majority, there are places that are competitive in the general election. So you can’t nominate somebody who’s just sort of unacceptable to a broader group of people and win. We had that experience in 2010 and 2012,” McConnell added.

To win back the Senate in November, Republicans would need a net pickup of just one seat to tip the current 50-50 balance. Republicans are defending 21 seats, compared to Democrats’ 14, including two seats currently held by Republicans that are in states President Biden won in 2020.

Five seats are rated by The Cook Political Report as toss-ups. Three of those — Nevada, Georgia and Arizona — are currently held by Democrats, while two — Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — are currently held by Republicans. In Pennsylvania, GOP Sen. Pat Toomey is retiring.

Meanwhile, three of the seats currently held by Republicans are ranked as “lean” Republican: Florida, Ohio and North Carolina. In Florida, GOP Sen. Marco Rubio is running for reelection, while Ohio and North Carolina are open races because GOP Sens. Rob Portman and Richard Burr are retiring.

Only one seat currently held by Democrats is ranked “lean” Democrat: New Hampshire, where Democratic Sen. Maggie Hassan is running for reelection.

Despite having to play defense on a larger swath of seats, Republicans are increasingly confident about their chances of winning back the majority in November as Biden struggles to rebound in polling and Americans remain concerned about inflation and the economy more broadly.

But first Republicans need to navigate several crowded primaries that will determine who their nominee is in the general election.

### A2 Too soon

#### Dems will likely lose but the election is not “called” – things can always change

Henry Olsen June 1, 2022, senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, “The GOP midterm wave is set — and Democrats can’t do anything about it” WASHINGTON POST, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/06/01/gop-midterm-wave-is-set-democrats-cant-do-anything-about-it/

It’s perfectly understandable why election analysts tend to be cautious, even if they suspect the election cycle is developing in a particular direction. There’s always a chance something will intervene, and individual races do matter. Even in wave years, some candidates outperform the partisan fundamentals or get lucky and face an extremely weak challenger. That happened in a few high-profile Senate races in the 2010, when Republican candidates Sharron Angle in Nevada and Christine O’Donnell in Delaware both lost winnable races because they were so outside the mainstream (O’Donnell had to cut an ad clarifying that she wasn’t “a witch” after clips surfaced of her saying she had “dabbled in witchcraft”). No serious analyst wants to call a race before all the facts are in.

But that doesn’t mean we can’t make general projections. Presidents rarely improve their approval ratings in the run-up to a midterm vote, and people who disapprove of how a president is doing the job usually decide to give the other party a shot. Some vulnerable incumbents will stand against the tide, but the massive swell will also surprise a few people thought to be safe. The result is that the odds are heavily in favor of analysts rapidly revising their projections in Republicans’ favor as campaigns gain traction in the fall.

All this means Democrats will be thankful if they lose only 20 to 35 House seats this fall. They know they could lose as many as 40 or even 50 seats, propelling Republicans to their greatest House majority since 1928. The GOP, meanwhile, knows they can make history if they keep their heads down, nominate sane candidates and keep the focus on President Biden.

#### It’s not too soon – momentum matters and it starts early

Henry Olsen June 1, 2022, senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, “The GOP midterm wave is set — and Democrats can’t do anything about it” WASHINGTON POST, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/06/01/gop-midterm-wave-is-set-democrats-cant-do-anything-about-it/

Political analysts characterize elections where one party makes outsize gains as “waves.” The metaphor is apt: Political currents develop well before elections. They gather strength as the big day approaches and then crash ashore with great power, destroying whatever vulnerable seats the opposing party holds in its wake.

The key to understanding these waves is the knowledge that once they are underway, there’s nothing the other side can do to stop it until voter anger renders its verdict. The only question is how high the wave will become and how far “inland” it will go — that is, how many seats and members previously thought impervious to challenge will be swept out to a watery political grave.

### A2 Abortion

#### Abortion isn’t enough to swing the election in favor of the Dems

Alan Greenblatt May 27, 2022, “You Don't Need to Be a Fortune Teller: Signs Point to GOP Sweep This Year,” GOVERNING, <https://www.governing.com/now/you-dont-need-to-be-a-fortune-teller-signs-point-to-gop-sweep-this-year>

“There are two big things that we don’t know yet how they will play: The first one is the Jan. 6 committee and its hearings, and the second one is this abortion decision,” says Lara Brown, a political scientist at George Washington University. “Depending on how those capture the attention of the country and different demographics, I do think that can impact the magnitude of what ever wave the Republicans are looking at.”

But in the weeks since Justice Samuel Alito’s majority opinion on abortion law was leaked, there’s been no evidence of a surge in Democratic participation in primaries or early voting. Not even any real uptick.

“I’d be surprised if Roe v. Wade did not energize the marginal Democratic voter, the sort that would usually vote in the presidential race but not necessarily in the midterm, but that only gets you so far,” Olsen says. “The real game is the swing voter.”

# Link

### Link – NATO rally point

#### Ukraine opened a window for Biden and the Dems – invigorating alliances like NATO resonates with voters as a key issue

Lauren Gambino March 15, 2022, “Will Biden’s handling of the Ukraine crisis prove popular with US voters?” THE GUARDIAN, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/15/joe-biden-russia-ukraine-democrats-midterms

Now Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has given Biden a second chance to demonstrate the steady leadership he promised, raising hopes among Democrats that the White House’s efforts to punish Moscow for its shocking aggression will resonate with voters in this year’s midterm elections.

But Democrats face stiff headwinds in their attempt to defy historical trends and maintain their narrow majorities in Congress. Among their biggest obstacles are Biden’s deep unpopularity and the rising cost of gas, food and rent, for which Republicans have faulted Democrats.

At the Democrats’ annual retreat in Philadelphia last week, party leaders spoke of a world – and an electorate – reshaped by Russia’s invasion of its democratic neighbor. They said the conflict provided a new clarity of purpose – and a new villain: Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

As the war in Ukraine threatens to push already rising gas prices even higher, Democrats are blaming “Putin’s tax hike”. At the same time, they are touting the administration’s role coordinating a worldwide response to Russia, and the devastating impact of economic sanctions, highlighting a contrast with former president Donald Trump, who has continued to praise Putin.

“That economic bomb that went off inside that dictator’s regime would not have been possible without Joe Biden’s leadership,” New York congressman Sean Patrick Maloney, the chair of House Democrats’ election campaign arm, said in Philadelphia.

This strategy comes with considerable risk. Foreign policy is rarely front of mind for voters. The situation remains volatile and unpredictable. And Republicans are arguing that inflation was on the rise long before Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine.

In a recent op-ed for CNBC, House minority leader Kevin McCarthy blamed the administration’s energy policy for exacerbating the current crisis.

“Unfortunately, the Democrats’ wayward leadership for the past year has undermined America’s energy potential with senseless policies that seem designed to reverse decades of success and wreak havoc on our gas prices,” he wrote.

Yet Democrats see some reasons to be hopeful. Recent surveys have shown an uptick in support for Biden, buoyed by approval of his handling of the conflict in Ukraine, though his overall ratings are still mired in the low 40s.

Americans broadly say they support the administration’s response to the conflict, which includes efforts to cripple Russia’s economy and aid Ukraine. According to a Reuters/Ipsos poll, Americans overwhelmingly favor a ban on oil and gas purchases from Russia, even if it means paying more at the pump. Among those respondents, a quarter said they would be willing, at least in theory, to pay as much as it takes to support Ukraine, while 32% said they would be willing to pay between $1 and $2 more per gallon and 11% said they would be willing to pay more than $2 more.

Whether voters blame Putin or Democrats for the rising cost of their gas may yet be a central question of the midterm election.

“Democrats didn’t cause this problem,” Biden told Democrats in Philadelphia. “Vladimir Putin did.”

For American voters, foreign policy is often an issue that “doesn’t matter until it does,” said Bill Galston, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based thinktank.

He said matters of war and peace have “represented two opposite turning points” in Biden’s presidency. While Afghanistan hurt his image as a statesman who could rebuild America’s credibility with allies after four turbulent years of Trump, Galston said the war in Europe has given the US president another chance to prove himself.

“We’ve been through about three decades – the post cold-war era, which has now ended, thunderously – when foreign policy didn’t matter so much,” he said. “But now it does, and I expect that it will continue to, because now we face severe challenges on our western front in Europe and our eastern front in the Indo-Pacific.”

He added that the conflict “has played to the strengths of president Biden and his foreign policy team: they are all deeply transatlantic in their history and their commitments.”

As a senator and vice-president, Biden worked to strengthen the alliances forged in the aftermath of the second world war. Now as president, he sought to unite democracies around the world against the threat of rising autocracies, an effort complicated by the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol and the widespread belief among Republican voters that the 2020 election was stolen.

In recent weeks, Biden has rallied world leaders, tapping his deep foreign policy experience to reinvigorate old alliances that his predecessor had disparaged and nearly abandoned.

“I’ve spent literally hours and hours and hours and hours keeping the alliance together – the EU, Nato, and all of our allies, including our Asian allies,” he told Democrats in Philadelphia. “As a result, we’ve been able to ramp up our economic pressure on Putin and further isolate Russia on the global stage.”

Inflation has weighed down Biden’s approval rating, as Republicans blame government spending and Democrats’ energy policies for the rising cost of gasoline. Research suggests that rising gas prices drives consumer pessimism, an effect that is particularly noticeable among Americans who lived through the 1970s oil crisis.

Guy Cecil, chairman of the Democratic political action committee Priorities USA, told reporters during a briefing last week that Biden’s handling of the war “was reminding people why they voted for Joe Biden to begin with and, frankly, why they opposed Donald Trump”.

Although much of the Democrats’ 2022 messaging will be focused on the party’s economic agenda and legislative accomplishments, Cecil said the war in Russia provides a stark contrast between the president and Trump, who has forced some in his party to walk a tightrope as they aim to condemn Putin without crossing the former president. Priorities USA recently released a dark new ad that highlights Trump’s repeated praise of Putin and accuses Republicans of aligning with a “murderous dictator”.

“Donald Trump continues to say he wants to be a player in politics; he’s endorsing primary candidates around the country,” Cecil said. “He’s raising money for candidates at Mar-a-Lago. He’s doing campaign events, and I think every candidate should be held accountable for Trump’s position.”

In Philadelphia, Democrats expressed confidence that Biden’s leadership in recent weeks would shake the long shadow cast by the administration’s exit from Afghanistan.

“I’m not surprised that his numbers have already bounced back up, and I think you’re going to see that the worst is behind us, and the next chapter is going to be where the American people rediscover they elected a strong, decent man, who is fighting for very important things,” Maloney said. “And it’s the Democrats that are doing that with him against Republican opposition.”

### Link – Ukraine pivot

#### Biden’s multilateral response to Russia is a unique instance where foreign policy can flip the midterms

JULIA MANCHESTER et al, ALEX GANGITANO AND HANNA TRUDO ’22, February 28, “Russia invasion of Ukraine could play unusual role in midterms,” THE HILL, <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/595941-russia-invasion-of-ukraine-could-play-unusual-role-in-midterms/>

Russia’s deadly invasion of Ukraine could throw a wrench into the midterms as voters scrutinize President Biden’s efforts to counter aggression from a global superpower and U.S. adversary.

Foreign policy rarely touches down-ballot elections. But Russia’s moves in Europe, and the U.S.’s response, could have domestic implications that hit Americans’ pocketbooks and would come on top of already high gas prices and record inflation — issues voters rank among the most important.

Additionally, deep networks of immigrants from Eastern Europe reside in some of the nation’s most critical battleground states, and the president’s approval rating, a predictor of his party’s midterm performance, remains low.

“This is going to be a backdrop to a lot of the elections now,” said Dave Pepper, the former chair of the state Democratic Party in Ohio, a key swing state with the country’s fifth-highest population of Ukrainian residents.

Some Democrats believe Biden is well-positioned to explain his decisions on Ukraine and defend the increasingly severe sanctions he is levying against Moscow. The president this week called Russia’s invasion a “brutal assault on the people of Ukraine” and a “premeditated attack.” He placed new economic and technology sanctions on the country on Thursday, and officials said they still have options on the table.

Pepper speculated that Biden’s posture on the crisis — and the isolationist response from some GOP candidates — could create an opening for down-ballot Democrats in November’s elections.

Ohio Republican Senate candidates Josh Mandel and J.D. Vance have questioned why the U.S. is focused on the foreign conflict while domestic issues mount. Vance went as far to say on a right-wing podcast that he doesn’t “really care what happens to Ukraine one way or another,” before walking back the statement.

Other Ohio GOP contenders, including Jane Timken, Mike Gibbons and Matt Dolan, have called for economic retaliation against Russia. All the candidates have condemned Biden’s handling of the situation.

“I wasn’t really thinking about the race in this way, but all of a sudden my own heritage is relevant in how I vote,” Pepper said, referring to how Midwest residents who have a connection to Eastern Europe may perceive the crisis.

He added, “It does add a wrinkle.”

Biden and aligned Democrats are desperate to avoid a repeat of the chaotic U.S. pullout from Afghanistan last year, for which the president still receives criticism — and which Republicans have claimed gave Russian President Vladimir Putin the green light to move on Ukraine.

While Democrats denounce the conservatives aligned with former President Trump, who praised Putin during his term in office and in statements last week, many are fretting about how the geopolitical realities of the invasion could hit working populations in the U.S. over the next eight months.

Recent polling shows Americans’ faith in Biden’s ability to handle the situation is low. A Harvard CAPS-Harris Poll survey obtained by The Hill on Friday found 37 percent of Americans said they were confident in the administration’s ability to effectively counter Russia, while 63 percent said they were not confident. The same poll found Biden’s approval rating at a record low 38 percent.

“Voters believe the Biden administration can and should do more to protect Ukraine,” said Dritan Nesho, co-director of the poll. “They see the sanctions so far as too weak and ultimately ineffective, and a majority say the United States should defend Ukraine in case of a full Russian invasion — including a majority of Democrats. A stronger posture appears to be both the right policy and good politics for the administration.”

Biden and Democrats may need to balance voters’ desire to push back on Russia and the domestic consequences of doing so.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is likely to make gas prices surge in the West, with the United States expected to take a major hit. While Biden suggested on Thursday that the U.S. may release oil from its strategic reserve in an effort to offset the rising cost at the pump, Democrats acknowledge the president’s limited reach and are preparing accordingly.

“In the short term, partially if gas prices shoot up and the stock market becomes volatile, you’re going to see numbers looking a little worse for Democrats simply because it’s a political market reaction to these indicators,” said Ivan Zapien, a lobbyist and former Democratic National Committee official.

Biden entered the White House last year with no illusions about getting on solid footing with Putin, whom prior administrations beyond Trump have tried to appease. As former President Obama’s No. 2, Biden’s global policy docket included Russia, which some believe helped prepare him to delicately navigate what has been a brutal and bloody several days.

If history is any indication, there’s room for Biden to advance his public perception in a time of crisis. But that comes with complications.

“Foreign affairs, when it’s removed and it’s happening someplace else, traditionally, historically has not had a huge impact on midterm races,” said Chris Stirewalt, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

In a new piece for The Dispatch, Stirewalt outlines a number of notable exceptions.

While the 1974 elections took place in the wake of the Watergate scandal, the Yom Kippur War, which led to an oil embargo from the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, sent gas prices through the roof when Americans were already plagued with high inflation. Democrats won four seats in the Senate and 49 seats in the House.

He also argues that Democrats suffered losses in ’94 partly as a result of a U.S. humanitarian mission in Somalia, which was considered a major miscalculation under then-President Clinton.

“These things can penetrate, but they have to function at a very large scale,” Stirewalt said. “What has happened in Ukraine has already penetrated.”

Democrats argue that the U.S. response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine gives Biden an opportunity to lead on foreign policy.

#### Ukraine could shift the election

Alan Greenblatt May 27, 2022, “You Don't Need to Be a Fortune Teller: Signs Point to GOP Sweep This Year,” GOVERNING, <https://www.governing.com/now/you-dont-need-to-be-a-fortune-teller-signs-point-to-gop-sweep-this-year>

There are several known unknowns that could shift the landscape between now and Nov. 8. Inflation might tick lower and the war in Ukraine may have played out in a way that helps Biden politically. Perhaps Tuesday’s school shooting in Texas will activate voters in a way that other mass shootings have failed to do. An NPR/Marist poll released last week found that the expected Supreme Court action to overturn Roe v. Wade should help energize Democrats. Sixty-six percent of Democrats said it would make them more likely to vote this fall, versus 40 percent of Republicans.

### Link – Cyber

#### Dems are tying cybersecurity to Ukraine and making it a midterms issue

ROB CRILLY June 10, 2022, SENIOR U.S. POLITICAL REPORTER FOR DAILYMAIL.COM, “Senate Democrats sound the alarm on 'Russian interference' in the midterms FIVE MONTHS before Americans head to the polls and with the party trailing in the polls and at risk of losing the House and Senate,” DAILY MAIL, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10902051/Senate-Democrats-sound-alarm-Russian-interference-midterms.html

Leading Senate Democrats on Thursday urged U.S. intelligence agencies to be ready for Russian disinformation campaigns as the nation prepares for midterm elections in November.

At stake is control of the House and the Senate, as the Democratic party tries to stave off expected losses.

Senior Trump allies quickly dismissed the warning as another attempt to tie Republicans to Russia or explain away defeat.

But a grand jury has charged 12 Russian military intelligence officers with efforts to sway the 2016 presidential election against Hillary Clinton.

And a group of 17 Senate Democrats led by Sen. Amy Klobuchar, chairwoman of the Senate Rules Committee, and Sen. Jack Reed, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, wrote to senior defense and intelligence officials setting out their concerns that Russia's invasion of Ukraine only makes a disinformation campaign more likely.

'As the Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to an increase in Russian disinformation and warnings of potential cyberattacks, we urge you to ensure that your agencies are prepared to quickly and effectively counter Russian influence campaigns targeting the 2022 elections…' they write.

'Experts have warned that the increase in Russian disinformation and cyber threats creates a security concern for U.S. elections and that Russia will likely view the 2022 elections as a "ripe target" for influence operations.'

The letter was sent to Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Christopher Wray, and Director of the National Security Agency and Commander of U.S. Cyber Command General Paul Nakasone.

The Russian operation in 2016 included hacking into the Clinton campaign and Democratic National Committee servers, before leaking embarrassing emails, according to the indictments.

Hackers also tried to compromise state election systems, including voter registration databases, while troll farms spewed out fake news.

An investigation by the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that Russia ran a massive campaign to try to tip the scales in Donald Trump's favor and that it was carried out under the express orders of President Vladimir Putin.

But claims that the Trump campaign colluded with the Russian effort were never substantiated and he and his allies have accused intelligence agencies and investigators of running a witch hunt.

On Thursday, his allies quickly cried foul at the fresh warning.

His son, Donald Trump Jr, said on Twitter: 'Here we go again folks.'

Mike Shields, former chief of staff for the Republican National Committee, suggested interference was only a worry when Democrats lost.

'2016 - rigged. 2020 - not rigged. how dare you say elections are rigged,' he tweeted. '2022 - we're going to lose. rigged.'

With President Joe Biden mired in crisis, and with his ratings well underwater, his party is expected to lose control of the House and possibly the Senate too.

In their letter, the senators praised the way the administration had worked to reveal Russian covert actions and influence operations around its war in Ukraine.

And said they hoped for action to counter midterm interference.

'Our democracy has been a shining beacon for the world and as we continue to assist Ukraine and our European allies, we must also be vigilant in guarding against threats to our own system of government,' they wrote.

'With primaries underway for the 2022 midterm election cycle and ongoing preparations for the November general election, it is vital that the federal government does everything in its power to ensure the integrity of our elections against foreign threats.'

### Internal link – Biden boosts the party

#### Credit for Biden spills over to Dems in the midterms

Christina Pazzanese and Gerald Seib May 18, 2022. Harvard Staff Writer. Former executive Washington editor of The Wall Street Journal, author of its “Capital Journal” column, and part of the reporting staff that won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of 9/11. “Will rare U.S. unity on Ukraine lift Democrats?” THE HARVARD GAZETTE, https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/05/will-rare-u-s-unity-on-ukraine-lift-democrats/

I think it has two paths by which it could affect the midterm elections. The first is if people conclude that the Biden administration has handled this well, I think that will offset some of the negative impact of the messy withdrawal from Afghanistan and work to the Democrats’ benefit generally. Maybe not in a huge way, but at least at the margins. And second, of course, if something goes terribly wrong between now and Election Day, the whole equation could change.

GAZETTE: “Terribly wrong” in what way?

SEIB: A huge escalation, for example, a crossing of the red line by Russia into use of chemical weapons or, God forbid, a tactical nuclear weapon — then all bets are off. It’s impossible to know what happens then, and it’s impossible to know what the political impact is at that point. Conversely, if there’s a complete Russian collapse and somehow Vladimir Putin is pushed out, that’s a pretty dramatic change, and you’d have to reassess the political impact.

GAZETTE: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell both visited President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv in the last two weeks pledging the unqualified support of the U.S. How are the parties looking at Ukraine in terms of its strategic political value?

SEIB: I’m not sure they’re looking at it in raw political terms right now. I think this is one of those rare occasions in which people are actually trying to figure out what is the right thing to do. It’s unfortunate that it appears there were partisan rather than bipartisan voyages to Ukraine, pilgrimages to see President Zelensky. That was an opportunity missed, an unfortunate case in which the actual bipartisan spirit that prevails on Ukraine right now was not really demonstrated appropriately. It would have been nice if it were otherwise. On both sides, I think what party leaders are trying to do is to use this to underscore that they are not leading parties that are in favor of a wholesale American retreat from the international scene. And that was somewhat in question with the rise of isolationist sentiment in both parties over the last few years.

GAZETTE: As we get closer to Election Day, do you see the Republican Party dropping its support for Ukraine if it appears that Democrats and Biden are benefiting too much?

SEIB: It’s possible, but I think the lines have been drawn and hardened already, so I don’t think that’s likely. Since Reagan’s time in the early 1980s, there was a very strong international streak in the Republican Party. Ronald Reagan was an internationalist, not an isolationist, and he believed in America as a force for good in the world. That was the prevailing strain of thought inside the Republican Party and what we’ve seen here is it’s still the prevailing strain of thought inside the Republican Party. I think the more conventional leaders of the party, the non-Trump leaders of the party, like Mitch McConnell, are happy to see this whole Ukraine episode as proof that their view of America as an active international player is, in fact, the majority opinion within their party, and they’re just going to leave it at that.

GAZETTE: Knowing how important Trump’s endorsement is for many Republican candidates and his history of insisting on fealty as the price for that support, do you expect he will turn his own views on Ukraine and Putin into a loyalty test?

SEIB: That’s a really good question, and I don’t know the answer to that. In a way, it’s an awkward situation for Donald Trump because he was friendly with Vladimir Putin. He basically preached that the U.S. was over-engaged, overextended in the world, and that America First meant exactly that — America first — and that there ought to be a retreat on some fronts. Now you have a situation in which Americans seem to want the U.S. involved — to stop the Russians, to stop Vladimir Putin personally, and to show that we remain a force for democracy and against autocracy in the world. How does Donald Trump play that over time? I don’t think I know the answer. It’s interesting that he has chosen not to make a big issue of this. As I suggested, this is an awkward situation.

GAZETTE: Biden’s overall favorability with voters took a big hit with the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan last August. Since Russia’s invasion, he has recovered a bit, but is still viewed more unfavorably than favorably by all voters. Among independents, however, Biden is up by 30 points since the war began. How significant are these shifts, particularly among independent voters who were decisive for Biden in 2020?

SEIB: That is meaningful. It’s more meaningful in a presidential election than a midterm election, but that was really the Biden problem. The premise of the Biden presidency was “the adults would be in charge,” and the president would be somebody who, unlike his predecessor, understood how the world works, knew how to operate on the international stage, knew how to be an international force for good. And the whole Afghan withdrawal mess called that all into question. The advantage for President Biden is that his successful implementation of the Ukraine policy has the potential, if not already the impact, of returning the image of the Biden presidency back to where people thought it was at the outset. I think there has already been a return to a sense that the U.S. was leading the free world again, and that’s beneficial for everybody, frankly.

GAZETTE: If Russia appears to be regaining ground, what impact would that have on Biden and the Democratic candidates running?

SEIB: There’s two impacts: First, it’s not great for President Biden because the premise at this point here is that the policy is essentially working. It has the Russians on their back foot and in retreat. But if that’s not the case anymore, then the way this reflects on the president, and by extension his party, is different. Secondly, if things take a bad turn, then there are going to be some difficult decisions the U.S. will have to make that will have to be debated in political campaigns this fall. How much further do we go with Ukrainians? Questions like putting troops on the ground or sending military aircraft or making deeper commitments to Ukraine politically, those will be back on the table, so that changes the character and the nature and the substance of the debate here politically.

### A2 Dems won’t run on the plan

#### Dems take credit for the plan – voters even link it to the mid-term

Grace Panetta and John Haltiwanger June 9, 2022, “Top Senate Democrats sound the alarm about Russian interference in the 2022 midterms,” YAHOO NEWS, https://news.yahoo.com/top-senate-democrats-sound-alarm-184723933.html

Top Senate Democrats are concerned about Russian interference in 2022.

A group of senators urged leading national security and intelligence officials to stay vigilant.

The Ukraine war has provided an avenue for Russian disinformation to flourish in the US on the far right.

Leading Senate Democrats are sounding the alarm about Russian interference in the 2022 midterm elections.

A group of 17 Senate Democrats led by Sen. Amy Klobuchar, chairwoman of the Senate Rules Committee and Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, urged some of the nation's top military, intelligence, and national security officials to stay vigilant against interference in a new letter obtained by Insider.

"As the Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to an increase in Russian disinformation and warnings of potential cyberattacks, we urge you to ensure that your agencies are prepared to quickly and effectively counter Russian influence campaigns targeting the 2022 elections," the senators wrote in Thursday's letter.

The letter also cites an Insider report from March on how Putin's missteps in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has staunchly united the West and bolstered the NATO alliance while isolating Moscow economically and politically, could spur the Kremlin to redouble its efforts in undermining Western democracy through both cyberhacking and disinformation operations that are far cheaper to carry out than a land war on the scale of the Ukraine invasion.

"Manipulating social media is incredibly inexpensive compared to Javelins and ammunition," Chris Rouland, the CEO of Phosphorus Cybersecurity, told Insider. "If anything, Russia would get more aggressive in its manipulation of social media because it's almost free compared to a tank."

Ex-NSA hacker David Kennedy, the CEO of TrustedSec, told Insider that "Putin and the intelligence agencies are going to look at how to cause as much damage as possible" through cyber operations.

He added that the US in particular is a "ripe target" for continued Russian interference efforts because of the major impact Russia had in influencing the 2016 election.

Russia's successful history of meddling in the US "underscores the urgency" for 2022, senators say.

In 2016, Russia's interference campaign included hacking into the Hillary Clinton campaign and Democratic National Committee to obtain damaging internal emails, attempting to compromise state voter registration databases, and using bot and troll farms to spread misinformation about the candidates and sow division and anger among the American electorate on social media.

Russia also interfered in the 2018 and 2020 elections, the US intelligence community found, by focusing less on cyber hacking and more on manipulating the information environment through social media, state media, online journals, and proxies.

"Russia's history of interfering in our last three federal election cycles underscores the urgency of the current warnings," the senators wrote in the letter.

#### Dems are happy to focus on Ukraine to regain midterms momentum

Seung Min Kim et al, Sean Sullivan, Tyler Pager ’22, March 12, “Biden, Democrats infuse Ukraine crisis into a recast election-year pitch to voters,” WASHINGTON POST, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/03/12/biden-ukraine-russia-midterms/

President Biden and his party have moved in recent days to reorient their election-year pitch to voters around Russia’s invasion of Ukraine — seeking to shift blame for struggles to tame rising prices onto Vladimir Putin and promoting the White House strategy to punish the Kremlin as a muscular response to a geopolitical threat.

Democrats said they hope the message, which they honed in political meetings over the past week, will help address some of their biggest liabilities ahead of the November midterm elections. Chief among them are Biden’s low approval ratings and a widespread perception that Democrats are at fault for a sharp increase in inflation.

Now, Biden is repeatedly bringing up “Putin’s price hike” at the pump. White House officials have distributed talking points to allies urging them to echo this line. And Democrats are touting the economic sanctions Biden has leveled on Russia, contrasting them with former president Donald Trump’s praise for Putin.

### A2 GOP rally against the plan

#### GOP is divided – NATO still has a large base of support

Ashley Parker, Marianna Sotomayor and Isaac Stanley-Becker April 29, 2022, “Inside the Republican drift away from supporting the NATO alliance,” THE WASHINGTON POST, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/29/nato-republicans-trump/

Some two dozen House GOP lawmakers who voted for the 2019 NATO Support Act voted against the similar resolution this month, which reaffirmed support for the alliance and its principles. But in interviews, several of those House Republicans said they still support the organization and simply objected to what they viewed as problematic provisions that Democrats had added to the bill for perceived political purposes.

Several who switched their votes since 2019 objected to measures they said did not specifically address strengthening NATO to help Ukraine. Rep. Barry Loudermilk (R-Ga.) found it particularly problematic that the resolution instructed NATO to be involved when a country has “internal threats from proponents on illiberalism,” which he says could be interpreted as conservatism.

“I am a huge supporter of NATO — I served in the Air Force during the Cold War, worked with NATO during that time period,” he said. “These issues should be left to those individual nations.”

Loudermilk argued that Democrats had inserted “poison pills” into the symbolic resolution, which could be used against Republicans in the 2022 midterms. “It was the Democrats trying to politicize something and add things in there that we have no business working on,” he said, explaining his vote against the bill.

Similarly, from Rep. Robert B. Aderholt (R-Ala.): “I am wholeheartedly, unequivocally, without reservation, supportive on NATO.”

But Aderholt said he worried that the resolution “had some language in that I thought went on the political side. And I don’t want to see NATO go political. I want to see NATO stand up for, you know, what’s going on in Ukraine — stand up for Ukraine against Russia.”

The two bills are not exactly the same. The legislation in 2019 reaffirmed that federal money should not be used to remove the United States from NATO — which Trump was threatening at the time — while the bill from this month called on the government to “uphold the founding democratic principles of NATO,” as well for NATO “to continue to provide unwavering support to the people of Ukraine as they fight for their sovereignty, territorial integrity, and a democratic future.”

### A2 GOP can win on Russia

#### GOP won’t use international issues to their benefit

Daniel Pletka June 2, 2022, distinguished senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, “The Republicans Could Win the U.S. Midterms. Here’s What that Means for the World,” FOREIGN POLICY, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/02/gop-congress-midterms-foreign-policy-ukraine-taiwan/>

“Donald Trump’s political achievement in 2016 was to sense the possibility for a new [Republican] coalition unseen since before World War II,” Dueck writes. “He did this not by reiterating libertarian foreign-policy preferences. Rather, he combined non-interventionist criticism of ‘endless wars’ with hardline stands on China, jihadist terrorism, anti-American dictatorships in Latin America, and US defense spending.”

This is a sweet spot for Republican foreign policy, and understanding the reluctant internationalism of most of the party’s voters—a repudiation of the embarrassed anti-Americanism of the Democratic Party’s far left and the activist internationalism that has heretofore characterized the Republican Party leadership—will be key to geolocating a new Republican Congress’s preferred national security policy.

### A2 No fopo swing/ other issues thump

#### International issues can overwhelm domestic focus

Daniel Pletka June 2, 2022, distinguished senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, “The Republicans Could Win the U.S. Midterms. Here’s What that Means for the World,” FOREIGN POLICY, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/02/gop-congress-midterms-foreign-policy-ukraine-taiwan/

Domestic policy will likely dominate the politicking in Congress: inflation, crime, education, the border. But Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, like so many conflicts before it, has proved that as much as politicians wish to focus on “nation building here at home,” global realities intrude. Ukraine is the tip of the iceberg, but Republicans have their eye on plenty of other issues as well, including relations with China, the question of defending Taiwan, the continued isolation of Russia, the Middle East (think energy, Iran, and Israel), and, more broadly, defense spending. But before the substance of the foreign-policy challenge hits the House and Senate floors, the ideological question merits examination.

#### Foreign affairs matter to voters

Business Standard May 19, 2022, “Sagging global economy burdens Biden ahead of US midterm elections,” https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/sagging-global-economy-burdens-biden-ahead-of-us-midterm-elections-122051900013\_1.html

What's clear is that foreign affairs and geopolitics have returned as issues that could shape the opinions of U.S. voters.

Even as the midterm races intensify, Biden is devoting his time to other world leaders and not just Russian President Vladimir Putin and his attack on Ukraine. Biden's trip to South Korea and Japan follows recent meetings with the heads of Italy, Greece and the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. He is also meeting with the leaders of Finland and Sweden, who are seeking NATO membership, before he departs for Asia.

Yes, geopolitics will matter for U.S. elections again, said Doug Elmendorf, dean of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and a former director of the Congressional Budget Office. Terrorists and terrorist states have been potent, China is not becoming that much like us, and Putin has gone to war.

### Impact random – NATO good

#### NATO good – key to checking authoritarian backsliding

Ashley Parker, Marianna Sotomayor and Isaac Stanley-Becker April 29, 2022, “Inside the Republican drift away from supporting the NATO alliance,” THE WASHINGTON POST, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/29/nato-republicans-trump/

“We’re certainly going to have a lot of these talks with my colleagues, particularly next cycle, if there’s any assault on NATO that is launched,” Fitzpatrick said. “I will tell you that NATO needs to be reformed significantly. But it is absolutely critical that it be maintained because without NATO, dictators are going to, it’s going to be the Wild West internationally.”

Tommy Vietor, a National Security Council spokesman under Democratic President Barack Obama, said: “It’s a pretty shocking turn.”

“There’s an appropriate and important conversation to be had about the history of NATO expansion and whether it was well-thought-through,” said Vietor, now a co-host of “Pod Save America.” “But you didn’t see people in either party really fundamentally questioning the value of the alliance.”

## Impact

### Impact – turns NATO commitments

#### Red wave leads to European instability – causes doubt in U.S. commitments

Ashley Parker, Marianna Sotomayor and Isaac Stanley-Becker April 29, 2022, “Inside the Republican drift away from supporting the NATO alliance,” THE WASHINGTON POST, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/29/nato-republicans-trump/

Many European diplomats breathed a sigh of relief when President Biden, a staunch Atlanticist, denied Trump another term in 2020. Now, 16 months later, Biden’s role in marshaling Western allies behind Ukraine — and his recent vow to protect “every inch of NATO territory” — has alleviated doubt in Europe about U.S. commitments, at least in the short term.

But Europeans who were heartened by the outcome of the last American election are beginning to eye upcoming contests, including this year’s midterms and the 2024 presidential race. Their apprehension about a Republican takeover of Congress, which could revive Trump’s brand of foreign policy, is offset by hope that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will strengthen the Republican Party’s internationalist wing and compel the party to lock arms with Europe.

“I’m very concerned about the situation in America — the split of the society, the concentration on domestic issues, the underestimation of the importance of America’s international role,” said Thomas de Maizière, a former center-right lawmaker and high-ranking government minister in Germany who co-chaired a NATO working group convened in 2020. “But there are Republicans we work excellently with, and I would expect them to take on a larger role if their party takes power.”

Whether that assessment reflects an accurate reading of Republican politics is an open question. The answer, however, is existential in Europe, where the fallout from the war in Ukraine has showcased the importance of the United States and the limits of aspirations for European autonomy on matters of technology and defense, according to lawmakers and diplomats.

Flash points are already coming into view. In 2020, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg started a working group aimed at strengthening NATO. The group’s final product, “NATO 2030: United for a New Era,” included proposals, such as the creation of a Center for Democratic Resilience, that have been scorned by pro-Trump Republicans, including many of the 63 Republicans who recently voted against the House resolution affirming support for NATO.

### Afghanistan – GOP reinvades

#### GOP wants to reinvade Afghanistan

Sam Brodey, Asawin Suebsaeng, and Justin Baragona ‘21, August 27, 2021, “GOP Hawks Rage: We Want Our Forever War Back,” THE DAILY BEAST, https://www.thedailybeast.com/gop-hawks-rage-that-they-want-their-forever-war-back-after-kabul-attack

Republican lawmakers, former officials in Donald Trump’s administration, and conservative commentators are reacting to Thursday’s horrific Kabul attack by not only condemning the Biden administration—they’re also calling for a re-invasion of Afghanistan.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), long an Afghanistan war hawk who recently called on President Joe Biden to be “impeached” for the withdrawal, demanded on Twitter that the administration “reestablish our presence in Bagram as an alternative to the Kabul airport, saying it was a “problem of will” that it hadn’t been done yet.

“The retaking of Bagram would put our military at risk, but I think those involved in the operation would gladly accept that risk because it would restore our honor as a nation and save lives,” Graham continued.

Another GOP senator, Ben Sasse of Nebraska, released a statement urging Biden to “reverse course and fight for our people,” insisting that “weakness will accelerate the bloodshed” while pushing the administration to “rip up the August 31 deadline” and expand its perimeter beyond Kabul. Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) also demanded a “forceful response” from the president, saying he “must follow through on his word [and] make these terrorists pay.”

Democrats, meanwhile, spent Thursday sticking to expressions of condolence and grief over the loss of U.S. service members and Afghan civilians, with some offering a few scattered, toned-down references to payback.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), for example, said in a statement that “it must be clear to the world that the terrorists who perpetrated this will be sought and brought to justice.” And Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), long considered a hawk within her party, said the attack was a “tragic reminder that we must continue our counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan,” which “includes making sure those responsible for today’s attacks are brought to justice.”

The harshest language from any Democrat may have come from Biden himself, speaking from the White House Thursday evening.

“To those who carried out this attack, as well as anyone who wishes America harm, know this: We will not forgive. We will not forget. We will hunt you down and make you pay,” said Biden. “I will defend our interests and our people with every measure at my command… We will respond with force and precision at our time, at the place we choose and the moment of our choosing.”

Democrats’ messaging focus centered almost entirely on backing up Biden’s withdrawal date and the effort to evacuate U.S. and Afghan personnel safely. But a few lawmakers did offer some pointed criticism, albeit narrow, toward the administration, as the prospect of continued terror attacks jeopardizes the president’s commitment to leave the country by Aug. 31 while evacuating thousands of U.S. citizens and Afghan allies.

Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH), one of the GOP’s top targets ahead of the 2022 midterm election, said the U.S. must evacuate every citizen and Afghan ally “regardless of any arbitrary deadlines”—a veiled shot at Biden.

Officials who know the region well, like Rep. Andy Kim (D-NJ), also questioned that deadline in the wake of what Kim told The Daily Beast was a “catastrophic” day in Afghanistan.

“This attack really hurts,” said Kim, who was the point person on Afghanistan for Barack Obama’s National Security Council. “It underscores the danger that’s there and why it is we need to complete this mission.”

“We cannot leave unless we’ve gotten every American that wants to go,” Kim added. “I’ve heard the president say that, and I hope that’s true.”

Asked if he supported sending in additional troops to complete the evacuation mission, as Republicans suggested, Kim said he would defer to the Pentagon. But he added that if the president and his advisers determined they needed more time, “more money, more troops, I will do everything I humanly can from Congress.”

Various conservatives on Capitol Hill demanded brutal reprisals, with the top Republican in the Senate calling for what would amount to a double-down on the global war on terror.

“The war is clearly not ended. You can’t unilaterally end a war. It takes two to tango and these people will never stop fighting us. Their capabilities are still intact,” Rep. Dan Crenshaw (R-TX) said on Fox News on Thursday morning. “We should retake more airfields throughout the country… It will take troops on the ground and a complete reassessment of our strategy. The military can do it. We need the will politically to do it.”

Rep. Mark Green (R-TN) was even blunter with his assessment, declaring on Fox News that “all bets are off” because the Taliban didn’t keep its promise of safe passage to the Kabul airport, adding that America should “expand this operation” and “start killing bad guys.”

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) reacted to the attack by saying it offered “the clearest possible reminder that terrorists will not stop fighting the United States just because our politicians grow tired of fighting them,” calling for a redoubling of “our global efforts to confront these barbarian enemies who want to kill Americans and attack our homeland.”

Blackburn also called for the president to resign or be removed from office over the bloody terror attack, a mantra that was repeated by Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO), who had previously positioned himself as a “forever war” critic.

“It is now clear beyond all doubt that he has neither the capacity nor the will to lead. He must resign,” Hawley tweeted on Thursday afternoon.

Former Trump National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster, meanwhile, openly speculated that ISIS-K and the Taliban may have worked in conjunction on the suicide attacks despite the Taliban casualties and the long-running hostilities between the two terror groups. “I would not be surprised if ISIS-K was used as a cutout for the Taliban so they could humiliate us on the way out,” McMaster said on CNN.

“Was it worth it, really? What would be a better outcome? A sustained commitment of a few thousand U.S. troops who were continuing to enable the Afghans to bear the brunt of the fight or this catastrophe we’re seeing now,” McMaster added. “We have this ‘end the endless wars’ narrative but this is an endless jihad against us and if we don’t acknowledge that we’re putting ourselves at extraordinarily high risk.”

Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-IL), a Trump critic and another conservative hawk, praised McMaster’s remarks during multiple cable news hits on Thursday. Also blasting the “end the endless war crowd,” the Illinois congressman exclaimed that the “endless war just got fired up again” and that America’s next decision will determine “the future of terrorism not just in the region, but in this world.”

Trump allies, who supported the former president’s Taliban peace deal, prisoner release, and negotiated troop withdrawal, quickly jumped at the opportunity to blast the current administration while also calling for increased military action.

“Air superiority is something we have always had in Afghanistan,” former Trump Pentagon chief of staff Kash Patel said during a Fox News appearance. “And our predator program dominated the skies under President Trump, and we can do that again if we retake Bagram airfield because that is the center country ops.”

#### GOP supports reinvasion

Kevin Robillard ’21, August 26, “Republicans Push Biden To Re-Invade Afghanistan,” HUFF POST, Republicans Push Biden To Re-Invade Afghanistan

Republicans are pushing President Joe Biden to take actions that would amount to re-invading Afghanistan by either requiring the U.S. military to retake an abandoned air base or staying in the country long enough to restart the dormant war with the Taliban.

The calls were amplified Thursday following the deaths of a dozen U.S. service members and more than 50 Afghan civilians in a pair of bombings near the Kabul airport, the center of the American effort to evacuate the country’s wartime allies from Afghanistan. Intelligence officials believe a branch of the self-styled Islamic State (ISIS) that has battled the Taliban for influence are responsible for the attacks, according to reports.

In a statement, Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.), who has long opposed efforts under both Biden and President Donald Trump to end U.S. involvement in the two-decade war, said Biden needed to “rip up the Aug. 31 deadline and defend evacuation routes” by expanding the perimeter around the Kabul airport or by retaking Bagram Air Base.

“You are the commander in chief, sir; reverse course and fight for our people. This is likely to get worse, and weakness will accelerate the bloodshed,” Sasse said.

Other Republicans similarly suggested the United States pour more troops into the country.

### Afghanistan – presence key

#### Afghanistan still key to U.S. hegemony – must prevent China or Russia from monopolizing natural resources

JOHN C. HULSMAN ‘21, November 2, 2021, Dr. John C. Hulsman is president and managing partner of John C. Hulsman Enterprises, a global political-risk consulting firm headquartered in Milan, Germany and London, “America must get a lot better at playing the new 'Great Game'” THE HILL, https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/579159-america-must-get-a-lot-better-at-playing-the-new-great-game

The funny thing about history, as Mark Twain shrewdly put it, is that it does not repeat itself but it often rhymes. Following the dramatic collapse of America’s occupation of Afghanistan, a new Great Game is already advancing, with three players: China, Russia and the U.S./European Union.

Yet today’s Great Game 2.0 is far more multidimensional than the strategic contest of Kipling’s day. The new game will be played on more levels than the old one was, with diplomatic, economic, cultural, espionage and military maneuverings short of all-out war determining the outcome of the contest.

Another difference is that, this time around, the Central Asian states of the region have far more agency in terms of determining their own fates, looking to retain true independence and sovereignty amid the great powers.

Of course, the U.S. retains significant interests in the vast Central Asian region, the center of the pivotal Eurasian landmass. The neo-conservatives’ disastrously wrongheaded nation-building agenda must not be allowed to obscure this reality.

To “win” the game, enhancing its interests at the expense of its great power rivals, the U.S. must be infinitely strategically smarter than it has been over the past generation regarding the Central Asian region. First, the U.S. must accept the continuing need to play the Great Game itself. With the chaotic fall of Kabul, there is a real fear that ISIS Khorasan, al Qaeda and other jihadi organizations will reconstitute themselves in Central Asia, since the Taliban — even if their highly problematic pledges to spurn the terror groups are accepted — has limited control of Afghanistan’s porous borders.

Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testifying before the House Armed Services Committee, gloomily estimated that al Qaeda could reconstitute itself in Afghanistan in merely six to 36 months. Stopping this from happening by having limited but lethal assets in the region to halt Osama bin Laden’s heirs from attacking the American homeland still amounts to an overwhelming primary American national security interest.

The second primary U.S. national interest at play in the new Great Game is keeping either rival great power, China or Russia, from wholly dominating the Eurasian heartland, replete with its vast natural resources. Particularly, rising China, the architect of the $2 trillion Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) encompassing the region, must not be left to solely economically dominate Eurasia.

#### Presence key to block Russia-China coop

ELIZABETH WISHNICK ‘21, November 8, 2021, Elizabeth Wishnick, Ph.D., is a professor of political science at Montclair State University and a senior research scholar at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, “PROSPECTS FOR SINO-RUSSIAN COORDINATION IN AFGHANISTAN,” WAR ON THE ROCKS, https://warontherocks.com/2021/11/prospects-for-sino-russian-coordination-in-afghanistan/

The increasingly close bilateral relationship between China and Russia is one of the most interesting, consequential, and surprising geopolitical developments since the end of the Cold War. Beijing and Moscow — once bitter adversaries — now cooperate on military issues, cyber security, high technology, and in outer space, among other areas. While it falls short of an alliance, the deepening Sino-Russian partnership confounds U.S. strategists. Some have proposed driving a wedge between the two countries, but this seems unlikely for the foreseeable future.

Some have speculated that China and Russia might cooperate in Afghanistan to exploit the chaos left by the U.S. withdrawal. But is that true? Does the fall of Kabul to the Taliban pave the way for greater Sino-Russian coordination in Afghanistan?

In the immediate aftermath of the Taliban takeover, China and Russia seemed to have pursued shared interests and avoided undercutting each other. The two countries have engaged in some parallel actions of late by holding military exercises with Central Asian partners — both bilaterally and within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Russia has been expanding its economic cooperation and diplomatic outreach with Pakistan, while China perseveres in developing the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, a key artery of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Despite recent cooperation in the region, Chinese and Russian interests in Central and South Asia are not identical. China aims to integrate these regions economically into the Belt and Road Initiative, while keeping Indian influence at bay and addressing perceived security threats to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. By contrast, Russia’s objectives are to maintain its role as the primary security provider in what it sees as the greater Eurasian region and to balance its longstanding ties with India with a new approach to Pakistan. China and Russia share some positions on broader security considerations — such as a concern over the expansion of terrorism and drug-trafficking threats from Afghanistan — but they part company on certain key regional issues, notably the role of India, mechanisms for providing security in Central Asia, and recognition of the Taliban.

In Afghanistan, as in several other areas of their joint interaction, China and Russia project an appearance of coordination, but in practice their differing regional interests and identities set real limits.

Opportunities for Sino-Russian Coordination

At first glance, the U.S. exit from Afghanistan seems to present new avenues for Sino-Russian coordination. China claims to want to work with Russia on Afghanistan, or at least to appear to be doing so. On Sept. 16, Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, that “China is ready to strengthen coordination with Russia to jointly handle the issue of Afghanistan.” Lavrov has spoken similarly of working with China to “jointly manage changes” in Afghanistan.

Just prior to the collapse of the Afghan government, China and Russia celebrated the 20th anniversary of their treaty of friendship, good-neighborliness, and cooperation, signed in July 2001. Since 2019, the two neighbors have proclaimed that they have established a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, the epitome of strategic partnerships in the Chinese lexicon.

In some respects, China and Russia appear to share the same playbook on Afghanistan. Both blame the United States for the current chaos, and oppose U.N. measures to hold the Taliban to account on human rights. For instance, Beijing and Moscow voted against the appointment of a U.N. rapporteur for human rights issues in Afghanistan. They have also taken some complementary initiatives in Central Asia to boost their individual security cooperation with Central Asian states.

#### Lack of U.S. reinvasion prompts Russia-China partnership in Afghanistan

BRADLEY JARDINE AND EDWARD LEMON ‘21, October 7, 2021, Jardine is a global fellow at the Wilson Center’s Kissinger Institute on China and the United States, Lemon is a research assistant professor at the Bush School of Government and Public Service “IN POST-AMERICAN CENTRAL ASIA, RUSSIA AND CHINA ARE TIGHTENING THEIR GRIP,” WAR ON THE ROCKS, https://warontherocks.com/2021/10/in-post-american-central-asia-russia-and-china-are-tightening-their-grip/

Although America’s war in Central Asia may be ending, worries over potential conflict in the region remain high. On Oct. 1, following a war of words between Tajikistan’s government and the Taliban, the Russian foreign ministry raised concerns “about the growing tension in Tajik-Afghan relations against the background of the mutually acrimonious statements by the leaders of both countries.” In the wake of ongoing uncertainty about Afghanistan’s future, the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization is planning an unprecedented four exercises on the Tajik-Afghan border in October, all simulating an armed incursion.

States in Central Asia bordering this area are increasingly leaning on external partners to shore up their defenses. As the United States exits the region, Russia and China are ramping up their security assistance. Still, current trends do not point toward a great-power competition in the region between these two nations.

Just days after the Taliban marched into Kabul, Russia held two military exercises with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The second, larger exercise took place only 20 kilometers from the Afghan border and involved 2,500 Russian, Tajik, and Uzbek troops, as well as tanks, armored personnel carriers, attack jets, helicopters, and other weaponry in a simulated joint response to cross-border militant attack.

China is also enhancing its security presence. A few days after the Russian exercise concluded, China’s powerful Ministry of Public Security held counter-terrorism drills with its Tajik counterparts. China’s strategic activity in Tajikistan has grown significantly since it opened a small military facility in the country near the border with Afghanistan in 2016. It even undertook drills with the Ministry of Public Security — the first international training activities it had ever conducted.

Afghanistan, and China’s fixation on the idea of Uyghur militants returning from Central Asia to set up camps, has driven an unprecedented level of Chinese security activities in neighboring states. In 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping made a number of secret speeches in the bordering Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, since leaked to the New York Times, in which he expressed concern that “Uyghur fighters” could use Tajik territory as a transit zone to staging attacks in China. However, there is no evidence of Uyghur militants operating out of Tajikistan. In fact, recent International Criminal Court filings suggest the country’s Uyghur population has dramatically plummeted following in-country raids on Tajik territory by Chinese security services, targeting civilians in bazaars across the country.

China and Russia are bound by several interests in Central Asia. Both share a concern about the region becoming a source of terrorism. Both want to contain any instability that may emanate from Afghanistan. And both want to push the United States out of the region. This last goal has been realized, but neither Russia nor China can really take the credit for it.

Goodbye, America

With the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, Washington’s already limited role in the region looks set to diminish further. Prospects of a return of U.S. troops after the withdrawal were met with limited interest from Central Asian governments.

### Afghanistan – terrorism

#### Reoccupation key to check terrorism

Ben Wolfgang ‘21, November 8, 2021, “Outside looking in: After Afghanistan, U.S. scrambles for bases in central Asia,” WASHINGTON TIMES, https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/8/us-scrambles-bases-central-asia-after-afghanistan-/

“We are in conversations with Pakistan to keep the air line of communication open. We have also had conversations with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan,” Colin Kahl, the Pentagon’s undersecretary of defense for policy, told the Senate Armed Services Committee last week after lawmakers pressed him on America’s long-term counterterrorism strategy in and around Afghanistan.

Questions have been raised about what the Biden administration may be willing to offer in return for basing U.S. counterterrorism assets. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, New York Democrat, pressed Mr. Kahl on that question last week.

“We have some very specific ideas, but on that score … it is very sensitive,” he said. He told lawmakers he would discuss details in a classified setting.

The State Department also offered little clarity on where the effort stands.

“Fighting the scourge of terrorism is a global effort. We will continue to engage partners, allies, and key states around the world on how best to address it,” a State Department spokesperson said in a statement to The Washington Times. “Beyond that, we have nothing further to share regarding our deliberations on counterterrorism scenarios.”

### A2 Afghanistan presence bad

#### No unique turns – the U.S. will reimpose in Central Asia inevitably, question of “where” not “if”

Ben Wolfgang ‘21, November 8, 2021, “Outside looking in: After Afghanistan, U.S. scrambles for bases in central Asia,” WASHINGTON TIMES, https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/8/us-scrambles-bases-central-asia-after-afghanistan-/

President Biden is racing to find partners in Central Asia willing to host U.S. troops, equipment and intelligence assets that the Pentagon says are vital to keep al Qaeda, ISIS and other extremist outfits from launching deadly attacks out of Afghanistan, even as China and Russia expand their power in the strategically vital region and work to elbow out Washington.

More than two months after the last troops left Afghanistan, Pentagon and State Department officials have been tight-lipped about behind-the-scenes talks with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and other nations that represent the best long-term candidates to host American forces and equipment. Among other things, a base in one of those countries would likely serve as a U.S. hub for drone strikes against terrorists across the theater, including targets that are expected to appear in Afghanistan with the Taliban back in power.

U.S. manned and drone missions are currently organized out of bases in the Middle East 1,000 miles from the Afghanistan theater, often too far to make a difference when a target is sighted or a clash erupts. Taliban leaders are adamantly opposed to allowing U.S. and allied forces back into Afghanistan and insist they can deal with any terrorist operations in the country.

The U.S. struggle to secure a base in the region underscores a shifting global power landscape that has left Mr. Biden with limited leverage. The withdrawal from Afghanistan fueled a narrative that the U.S. is pulling back from the region, creating an even bigger window of opportunity for rivals that are eager to fill a power vacuum.

Indeed, some counterterrorism analysts say the White House has bungled the process and hasn’t proved it is more capable than its leading global rival, China, at forging military alliances with governments in Central Asia. Russia’s significant sway and historical links in the region also complicate the U.S. effort. The Kremlin is privately and publicly lobbying Afghanistan’s neighbors to refuse entreaties from Washington.

The U.S and its allies “bear the main responsibility among foreign actors for normalizing life in Afghanistan since their presence actually led to the current situation …,” Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told reporters after meeting with U.S. Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland for three days of talks in Moscow last month. “We strongly reaffirmed the unacceptability to Russia of any form of U.S. military presence in Central Asian countries,” he said, according to the Interfax news service.

Rising sense of urgency

The lack of presence in an unstable part of the world has lent a great deal of urgency to the U.S. search for a new base. Analysts warn that the current dynamic is untenable and carries major security risks, even though the Pentagon insists its “over-the-horizon” capabilities are sufficient.

### Heg good

#### U.S. decline tempts other powers to overtake hegemony

Marwa El-Shinawy ’22, March 1, Assistant Prof. at International American University for Specialized Studies (IAUS), “Opinion| Putin puts an end to US hegemony,” DAILY NEWS EGYPT, https://dailynewsegypt.com/2022/03/01/opinion-putin-puts-an-end-to-us-hegemony/

This apparent decline of US hegemony has profound repercussions as it urges many other great powers to move forward. Today, questions abound about how China will deal with Taiwan, Japan, etc., and issues related to its regional interests. Although the United States may still possess the hegemonic power, it no longer can unilaterally deter or enforce the actions of other great powers. Russia’s involvement in the Syrian civil war, the Iranian nuclear program, and aggression in the Arctic all clearly show that the Russians no longer believe that the United States is fully capable of containing or deterring their actions. Recent years have shown that other major powers are testing how far the United States will go to maintain its position in the system, and if the United States is perceived to be weak or unwilling, the great powers will assert their presence. Certainly, Ukraine is the latest example of Russia’s ability to limit American hegemony.

### Impact – A2 Trump in ‘24

#### Turn – red wave in ’22 propels Trump to run a losing campaign in ‘24

Frank Pignanelli & LaVarr Webb ‘21, September 24, 2021, Pignanelli is a Salt Lake attorney, lobbyist and political adviser who served as a Democrat in the Utah state Legislature, Webb is a former journalist and a semiretired small farmer and political consultant, “Opinion: Will Republicans win control of the House in ‘22?” DESERET NEWS, https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2021/9/24/22686193/republicans-house-2022election-trump-candidate-president-2024-political-influence

Pignanelli: A handful in the House and one in the Senate is the minimum for the GOP to capture control. Yet in many of these swing areas Trump’s influence is mixed. While voters still retain some fatigue from his presidential antics, Trump is the absolute face of opposition to the Biden administration. Republican tacticians must be extraordinarily disciplined and strategic in using this weapon wisely to protect their advantage as the election season ramps up in a few months. Too much or too little will cost them.

Webb: Trump could be a big help to all GOP candidates if he would encourage the base to vote, criticize Democrats all he wants, but stay out of primary battles and not demand personal fealty. But he is incapable of such altruism and thus will be a net drag on the party.

Is Trump gearing up to run for president in 2024?

Pignanelli: Trump is an extremely shrewd player. By consistently vocalizing the objections to the Biden administration, he is dominating the presidential contender field. Trump wants to make his position as strong as possible as he decides to pull the trigger in late 2023. But there are number of external factors, including economy, his legal issues and others which are just too remote to predict at this time.

Webb: I think Trump is running, but I hope I’m dead wrong. Even as disastrous as the Biden administration has been (and will continue to be), Trump can’t win. But he can win the GOP nomination and doom the party to another presidential loss.

#### No internal link between the midterms and 2024

Geoffrey Skelley and Jean Yi ’22, February 25, “Stop Using The Midterms To Predict Presidential Elections,” FIVETHIRTYEIGHT, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/stop-using-the-midterms-to-predict-presidential-elections/

The 2022 midterm election hasn’t even happened yet, but speculation about the 2024 presidential race is already underway, with many potential candidates positioning themselves for a possible run — and in the case of former President Donald Trump, doing so quite publicly. Early general election polls are already testing Trump against President Biden, too, with many questioning whether Biden will even run again in 2024, when he’d be 81 years old. Some Democrats have even gone as far as to venture that a rough midterm election for their party — which seems quite possible — might discourage Biden from running again, opening the door for Vice President Kamala Harris or another Democrat to win the party’s nomination.

But while a strong Republican performance in 2022 might influence Biden’s thinking on 2024, it’s a mistake to expect the midterm result to predict how the country will vote in the ensuing presidential election. As the chart below shows, there’s little relationship between the margin in the national popular vote for the U.S. House in a midterm election and the national popular vote margin in the next presidential contest.1 So whatever happens in the House this November, don’t expect it to forecast the results of the next presidential race.

More often than not, midterm and presidential results have been miles apart. For instance, in 1994, the GOP captured Congress in the midterm “Republican Revolution” amidst then-President Bill Clinton’s poor approval ratings, winning the House popular vote by about 7 percentage points. But in 1996, Clinton ended up claiming a sleepy reelection victory by 8.5 points over Bob Dole — a swing of more than 15 points. In fact, on average, there’s been a swing of about 12 points from the midterm to the subsequent presidential contest.

That said, midterm elections and their following presidential races have sometimes run close together: Democrats swept back into power in the 2006 midterm election with an 8-point edge in the House vote, for instance, and then-President Barack Obama won by a similar 7-point margin nationally in 2008. In fact, midterm and presidential elections have run closer together in recent years — but importantly, there is still not much of a relationship despite this. Rather, this seems to be happening because landslide presidential wins are increasingly a thing of the past. Instead, lopsided midterm results for the party not in the White House are increasingly becoming the norm, then followed by highly competitive presidential races.

One big reason midterm and presidential elections have such different outcomes is that they are fundamentally different kinds of contests. Midterm elections, for instance, tend to have much lower turnout than presidential elections, and what’s more, voters from the party that’s not in the White House are often much more likely to turn out. Additionally, some voters switch from the president’s party because of dissatisfaction with the status quo. And because the president’s party usually loses ground in a midterm, you still often see narratives that suggest a president’s reelection chances may now be in peril just after a midterm election.

#### It’s way too soon to predict 2024

Geoffrey Skelley and Jean Yi ’22, February 25, “Stop Using The Midterms To Predict Presidential Elections,” FIVETHIRTYEIGHT, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/stop-using-the-midterms-to-predict-presidential-elections/

Yet presidents can, of course, change their approach following a difficult midterm and/or their opponents in Congress can overstep after winning power, both of which can help improve the president’s public standing. And perhaps most importantly, two years is a lifetime in politics, leaving plenty of time for important factors like the state of the economy or war and peace to change in meaningful ways that will influence the electorate. For instance, a struggling economy, mediocre approval ratings, and a bad midterm can become a roaring economy, “Morning Again In America,” and a landslide victory in that narrow span of time, as was the case for former President Ronald Reagan’s 1984 reelection bid.

Given all this, Biden and Democrats who are uncertain about the party’s standing probably shouldn’t look to the 2022 election result as a sign of whether the president can win in 2024. It’s true that the midterm outcome could alter the public’s perception of Washington if Biden is facing off with a GOP-controlled Congress. But the actual midterm results won’t really tell us whether Biden is doomed or can win reelection. After all, we have no idea where things will stand in a couple years when it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation and the overall economy, much less sudden developments like the U.S.’s potential role in the conflict in Ukraine.

Of course, with all this said, it is indeed fun to take a look at the early polling of the 2024 race — trust me, it’s like catnip. Nevertheless, we need to take those early polls with many grains of salt. After all, even polls taken six months out from the general election are only moderately predictive of the final result — and at that point, we usually know who the nominees are.

The 2024 election is likely to be pretty competitive considering how divided our politics are, but the candidates do matter at the margins. So regardless of how many polls test Biden against Trump, time will tell whether we will really see the first general election rematch since 1956 — or if one or both parties end up nominating someone else entirely. But one thing is for certain: The result this November will not guarantee any result for November 2024.

#### The turn is not unique – Trump is already set to beat Biden

Max Greenwood March 29, 2022, “Poll: Trump leads Biden, Harris in 2024 match-ups,” THE HILL, https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/600146-poll-trump-leads-biden-harris-in-2024-matchups

Former President Trump is leading President Biden in a hypothetical 2024 match-up, according to a new Harvard CAPS-Harris Poll survey released exclusively to The Hill on Monday.

If the 2024 presidential election were held right now, the poll finds Trump getting 47 percent support compared to 41 percent for Biden. Twelve percent of voters are undecided.

Vice President Harris performs even worse in a hypothetical match-up with Trump. Forty-nine percent said they would choose Trump, while 38 percent said they would support Harris.

The poll, while very early, portends trouble for Democrats in their 2024 effort to maintain control of the White House after taking it back less than two years ago. Trump has repeatedly hinted that he’s considering another bid for the presidency and remains deeply popular among the GOP’s conservative base.

### Impact – A2 Democracy

#### “Death of democracy” is a leftwing political strategy not a real risk

DAMON LINKER ’21, OCTOBER 19, “Do Democrats really believe Republicans pose an existential threat to democracy?” THE WEEK, <https://theweek.com/feature/1006142/do-democrats-really-believe-republicans-pose-an-existential-threat-to-democracy>

Do Democrats really believe Republicans pose an existential threat to democracy?

They say they do, every day — in Congress, in op-eds, on cable news, in fundraising emails. But do their actions in the White House and on Capitol Hill confirm or belie it?

The answer, I think, is the latter. This doesn't mean that Democrats are intentionally lying to the country about the threat that Donald Trump and his staunchest allies pose to American democracy. But it might mean that many Democrats are lying to themselves about it. If these Democrats really believed what they are saying about this threat, they would be making different decisions about the party's priorities.

What would Democrats be doing differently if they truly thought that the country's other major party was working to eliminate free and fair elections? They would be prioritizing election reform. Not necessarily the kind of things contained in the seemingly doomed Freedom to Vote Act, which is a grab bag of reforms that federalize elections and make it easier to vote in various ways. I have no objection to eliminating some barriers to voting, but that doesn't address the vulnerability Trump exposed in the aftermath of the 2020 election. That vulnerability had to do with how votes are counted, how electoral votes are allocated, and how both are certified within states and in Congress.

This would mean, at the very least, overhauling the poorly drafted and dangerously ambiguous Electoral Count Act of 1887. It's possible that will happen between now and the party's likely loss of Congress in next year's midterm elections. But it's hardly been a priority for Democrats.

What has been? Attempting to pass a massive spending bill favored by the most progressive factions of the party. As Matthew Yglesias noted in a recent Substack post, this is the kind of high-risk behavior one would expect if Democrats were simply trying to get as much done before they lose control of Congress in the normal back-and-forth of electoral politics. It is not the kind of behavior one would expect from a party convinced that with their next victory Republicans are going to rig the system so that Democrats can never win power again.

What kind of behavior would one expect? Probably, as Yglesias points out, the kind of poll-driven calculus advocated by David Shor, the data-crunching Democratic strategist well known for advising the party to stop listening to the demands of progressive activists and lead with their most broadly popular proposals. That's because Shor has been partially driven to this position by his conviction that American democracy is in grave danger. This is consistent — as is his defense of Democrats working to add states to the country in order to boost the party's prospects in the Senate. If American democracy truly is at risk of being snuffed out in the near future by the GOP, Democrats should be more concerned about that than anything else, and acting accordingly.

Yet the party — very much including its leader in the White House, who ran for president warning about Donald Trump posing a potentially fatal threat to "the soul of America" — has chosen a different course. Rather than seeking to pass reforms to ensure Republicans can't overturn election results at the state level or in Congress and then supporting a large but smaller, more tightly focused spending bill that would be widely embraced, Democrats have acted like this was an ideal time to dole out favors to every flavor of progressive activist in the party. The result has been a decline in popularity for the president largely driven by a precipitous loss of support from Democratic-leaning independents.

Now, it's true that some on the left tilt their heads, squint their eyes, and otherwise work very hard to convince themselves that this way of proceeding is actually the best way of responding to the danger posed by Republicans — by addressing the economic problems confronting all Americans, including those attracted to Trumpian lies about election fraud. But that, again, is how you would talk and think if you considered the GOP a normal party offering an alternative slate of policies for the country. It's not a serious response to a movement supposedly hell-bent on overturning American democracy in favor of fascism or something fascist-adjacent.

But then why continually invoke a rhetoric of alarm? Perhaps because it's extremely effective at driving up turnout for Democratic candidates. One could say the same about most Republican invocations of voter fraud. Though telling Republicans that Democrats will inevitably cheat may convince a few GOP voters not to bother showing up on Election Day, it probably convinces far more that the party needs every single vote it can get to overcome a system rigged against them.

There's already some anecdotal evidence that Democrats are helping themselves with this two-step — talking as if the GOP is an existential threat to democracy but acting as if the really important thing is passing progressive legislation. Just look at the Virginia governor's race, where early voters are citing fear of Trump (who is of course no longer president) as their primary reason for supporting Democrat Terry McAuliffe against Republican Glenn Youngkin.

This doesn't mean the Democrats are engaging in a deliberate ruse. It means they're folding their fears about Trump and the GOP into their ideological agenda and then campaigning on election anxiety while rewarding partisan supporters when they turn to governing.

#### Democracy is overrated – accountability is not proven nor is solvency for war

Daniel Larison ’12, PhD in history from the University of Chicago, “Democratic Peace Theory Is False,” THE AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE, http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/democratic-peace-theory-is-false/

Rojas’ claim depends entirely on the meaning of “genuine democracy.” Even though there are numerous examples of wars between states with universal male suffrage and elected governments (including that little dust-up known as WWI), the states in question probably don’t qualify as “genuine” democracies and so can’t be used as counter-examples. Regardless, democratic peace theory draws broad conclusions from a short period in modern history with very few cases before the 20th century. The core of democratic peace theory as I understand it is that democratic governments are more accountable to their populations, and because the people will bear the costs of the war they are going to be less willing to support a war policy. This supposedly keeps democratic states from waging wars against one another because of the built-in electoral and institutional checks on government power. One small problem with this is that it is rubbish.

Democracies in antiquity fought against one another. Political equality and voting do not abolish conflicts of interest between competing states. Democratic peace theory doesn’t account for the effects of nationalist and imperialist ideologies on the way democratic nations think about war. Democratic nations that have professional armies to do the fighting for them are often enthusiastic about overseas wars. The Conservative-Unionist government that waged the South African War (against two states with elected governments, I might add) enjoyed great popular support and won a huge majority in the “Khaki” election that followed.

As long as it goes well and doesn’t have too many costs, war can be quite popular, and even if the war is costly it may still be popular if it is fought for nationalist reasons that appeal to a majority of the public. If the public is whipped into thinking that there is an intolerable foreign threat or if they believe that their country can gain something at relatively low cost by going to war, the type of government they have really is irrelevant. Unless a democratic public believes that a military conflict will go badly for their military, they may be ready to welcome the outbreak of a war that they expect to win. Setting aside the flaws and failures of U.S.-led democracy promotion for a moment, the idea that reducing the number of non-democracies makes war less likely is just fantasy. Clashing interests between states aren’t going away, and the more democratic states there are in the world the more likely it is that two or more of them will eventually fight one another.