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Counterplan solves Russian aggression or there’s no impact:

1 – Russian aggression is inevitable – that’s all their 1ac ev that says Russia’s emboldened now, the counterplan solves it better:

#### Aggression is broadly inevitable but the counterplan’s the best chance that NATO has at deterring Russia

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As Vladimir Putin made clear in his recent Victory Day speech, the war in Ukraine will grind on for years. Even if Russia ultimately retreats, this won’t lead to a lasting peace. During the Cold War, Western Europe could confidently rely on American military power to deter Soviet aggression. This is no longer true. And Putin and his successors will continue to exploit this fact — unless and **until NATO decisively reorganizes** itself.

The United States and Europe are understandably wary of engaging in direct conflict with Russia, but they can still do more than provide short-term assistance to Ukraine. **Now is the time** to start taking steps to **establish NATO as a credible force for the defense of Western democracy** in the 21st century. Bold measures are required, including dramatically revising the NATO treaty, raising an army in Europe and even expelling countries who have betrayed their democratic commitments. But it’s the **best way to deter the Kremlin** and ultimately avoid more brutal wars in the future.

European democracies have resisted this path in the past, but the only realistic response to the attack on Ukraine is to construct their own powerful army as part of a reorganized NATO. The Ukraine tragedy has generated dramatic increases in European defense budgets, but this is only the first step toward building a large and permanent fighting force that could take the field against future Russian invasions of NATO members in the Baltic — or Finland or Sweden once they join the alliance. While the Europeans can continue to rely on American air and naval power, they themselves must be prepared to take the leading role in their own defense on the ground.

This **won’t happen unless Europeans rapidly commit themselves to a concrete action plan** that requires each NATO member to fulfill strong and specific military obligations on an annual basis. No less important, governments must place their troops under the control of a unified command structure. If each country sends its fighters into the field under its own national commander, their separate forces would be overwhelmed by coordinated Russian assaults, especially in an era of lightning-fast weapons.

This raises a very real institution-building challenge for the continent’s political leaders. Only the European Union is in a realistic position to organize a broad-based military effort. Its parliament is directly elected by the citizens of all the states in the Union. After each election, the majority of delegates choose an executive commission — currently led by Ursula von der Leyen — to make key policy decisions. This body has the precious democratic legitimacy required to embark on such an unprecedented military initiative.

At present, however, the treaties defining the powers of the EU don’t grant the Union any war-making authority whatsoever. Before the commission can step into the breach, another key institution — the Council of Ministers — must propose revisions that empower the commission to move forward with its rigorous demands upon the member states.

The council consists of the chief executives of each country. But fortunately, its current leader is Emmanuel Macron — who staked his presidential campaign against Marine Le Pen on an emphatically continental vision of France’s future. Many commentators have downplayed Macron’s achievement by emphasizing Le Pen’s success in generating popular support for her hard-right nationalist program. Yet the fact remains that Macron is the first French president who has won a second term in office in the last 20 years — and he did so by a decisive 59-41 margin.

The French president is the continental leader with the strongest democratic mandate to expand the EU treaties to authorize collaboration with NATO to confront the Russian military threat. Indeed, Macron has already stated that “[i]n the coming weeks, we need to bring to being a European proposal to forge a new security and stability order. We need to build it between Europeans, then share it with our allies in the NATO framework.”

Here is where Joe Biden can play a crucial role. He should not only publicly encourage Macron and von der Leyen to begin the hard bargaining required to enact the dramatic revisions to EU law required before a European army can become a reality. Since the reorganization of NATO also requires America’s consent to treaty revisions, Biden should immediately announce his strong support for the necessary changes.

Normally, of course, it is virtually impossible to win the two-thirds Senate majority needed for treaty revisions. The Ukraine bloodbath, however, has dramatically transformed the political situation. With Macron and von der Leyen embarking on their own intensive efforts to reconstruct NATO, Biden will be in a strong position to gain the bipartisan support of a supermajority — especially since the Europeans are now prepared, at long last, to pay their fair share of the overall defense effort. It will take a lot of hard work to develop a concrete action program for the new continental army and assure its effective implementation in each of the states of the European Union. If serious efforts to lay the legal foundations don’t start immediately, Europe won’t have a realistic chance of putting a fighting force on the ground by 2030.

Even if Democrats lose control of the Senate in 2022, this will be one of the rare issues where Capitol Hill will likely stand behind the president. In the meantime, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his team can offer concrete help to Macron and von der Leyen in their ambitious campaign to gain broad-based political support for the reconstruction of NATO on their side of the Atlantic.

Even with America’s help, their success is by no means assured. At best, it will take a year or two of wheeling-and-dealing before EU leaders can gain the legal authority to develop a concrete action program and assure its effective enforcement in each of the states of the European Union. Nevertheless, there will never be a better time to make this effort — and if it succeeds, Putin and his successors will confront a decisive deterrent.

In giving their strong support to the European effort, however, Biden and the Senate should also **insist that the new NATO remain faithful to its founding princi**ples. In particular, when the treaty was first signed in 1949, **NATO members attached a fundamental condition to their pledge of mutual military assistance**. They made it clear that they **would come to a country’s defense only if its government was making a good-faith effort to “strengthen their free institutions.”** **Otherwise, it could not rely on its NATO allies to come to its defense against attack**.

Seventy-five years later, it is painfully apparent that some NATO countries are working to destroy freedom rather than strengthen it. Turkey is the most obvious example. Over the past decade, it has been transformed into an authoritarian state by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Worse yet, Erdoğan sent his army to help Syria’s despotic regime fight NATO’s troops — battling against the very alliance he and his predecessors had pledged to support. Since Turkey is neither a reliable ally nor a defender of “free institutions,” Biden and the Senate should refuse to sign a treaty that continues to recognize it as a NATO member.

Hungary is a tougher case. Like Erdoğan, Viktor Orbán has used his time in office to create an “illiberal democracy,” which decisively undermines NATO’s founding commitment to freedom. Moreover, when he was running for reelection during the early days of the Ukraine war, he condemned Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, “as an enemy of the Hungarian nation” and campaigned on a platform that opposed any EU sanctions against Russia for its invasion. He then used his control of the mass media to deny his opponents a fair opportunity to challenge his celebration of Putin’s aggression. As a consequence, Orbán’s “landslide” victory at the polls only dramatizes his success in entrenching his illiberal principles into the nation’s constitution.

At the very least, Biden should insist that Hungary be suspended from NATO until it can credibly reestablish that it has dramatically changed course and is on the way to rebuilding its “free institutions.” There is every reason to believe that the leadership in Brussels and Paris would respond to this American initiative with enthusiasm. Indeed, von der Leyen is already leading the commission down a rarely invoked path that would strip Hungary of the billion-dollar EU subsidies its government receives — which Orbán now uses as a slush fund to sustain his dictatorial ambitions.

The commission is also seriously considering similar steps against Poland in response to its continuing defiance of decisions by the European Court of Justice, which has declared that the current government is violating fundamental principles of constitutional democracy to which the European Union is committed. If von der Leyen gains the necessary support to suspend Poland’s voting privileges in parliament until it complies with the court’s demands, Biden should support its suspension from the Alliance as well.

The challenges ahead are extraordinary. But the reconstruction of NATO not only represents the **West’s best chance to prevent future Russian aggression**. It also **offers an opportunity for the United States and Europe to revitalize** the great Enlightenment tradition of **liberal democracy** against the nationalist demagogues seeking to destroy it on both sides of the Atlantic.

#### Countering democratic backsliding within the alliance is a prerequisite to effective deterrence

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As Western leaders gather in Brussels this week for their annual NATO summit, the Atlantic alliance faces a daunting set of challenges: Middle East instability, an ongoing mission in Afghanistan and, above all, a resurgent Russia, which has overturned Europe’s security order in Ukraine, used chemical nerve agents on British soil, and continues to deploy instruments of hybrid warfare against the United States and other alliance members. President Trump’s repeated suggestions that NATO is “obsolete” and freeloading on American largesse risk damping public support for the alliance that rushed to America’s aid after 9/11. These threats are paramount. Often overlooked, however, is the **threat from within: NATO member governments gradually undermining their own democratic institution**s, unraveling the common tie between members of an alliance “founded on the **principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law**,” and thereby undercutting it as an effective guarantor of the “freedom and security of all its members.”

Yes, **NATO must continue to deter its external adversaries—principally Russia**. But **democratic regression** among its own members **makes that task more difficult**.

In alliance states like Turkey, Hungary and Poland, the rise of authoritarian parties by democratic means has led to crackdowns on those same democratic processes that brought them to power. Other member nations, ranging from Slovakia (where a journalist investigating government corruption was recently assassinated) to the Czech Republic (whose Freedom House national democratic governance ranking declined over the past year) to the United States itself (where Trump, the ostensible leader of the free world, routinely lavishes praise on Russian President Vladimir Putin), exhibit worrying trends. All have been countered to varying degrees by pushback among civil society, the judiciary and independent media. Nonetheless, this **rising illiberal tide** risks **exposing NATO members** to Russian subversion, thereby reducing the alliance’s cohesion and effectiveness, and weakening its important post-Cold War role as a consolidator and defender of democracy. While NATO has completed several out-of-area missions in places ranging from the Balkans to Afghanistan to Libya, many today question whether the alliance would militarily defend one of its own member states.

This is not the first time NATO has faced democratic backsliding within its ranks. At the alliance’s creation in 1949, authoritarian Portugal was a founding member; it would remain a dictatorship until 1974. When a group of Greek military officers launched a coup against their democratically elected government in 1967, NATO did not expel the junta-led regime. Nor did the alliance move against Turkey when its military repeatedly overthrew various civilian administrations.

Such decisions to overlook the authoritarian character of certain NATO members could—and were—justified as the sort of necessary evil compelled by the Cold War’s bipolar logic: Soviet communism was the preeminent threat to the West and, whatever their faults, the authoritarian regimes in Greece, Turkey and Portugal were reliably anti-communist.

Today, the geopolitical situation has changed dramatically. While **Russia** has reemerged as the principal ideological and strategic adversary of the West, no longer does the Kremlin **espouse** Marxist-Leninism but rather a **cynical illiberalism that exploits corruption, nativism and strongman rule**. Moscow has gone from being a revolutionary power to a reactionary one. But its antagonism toward the United States and its allies remains. The **Kremlin** **perceives** Russia’s **national interest as destabilizing Western institutions** like NATO and the European Union, and the **increasingly illiberal governments across the West**—the sort that, during the Cold War, would have been resolute foes of Soviet influence—can today be **low-hanging fruit, ripe for Russian picking**.

That’s why both of us have joined a bipartisan working group urging **NATO** heads of state to use their summit this week as an opportunity to explicitly and concretely reaffirm the **alliance’s commitment to democratic norms** and institutions espoused in NATO’s founding document, the Washington Treaty. Such a reaffirmation will begin to put **pressure on wayward member states** to desist in their assaults on judicial independence, press freedom and governmental checks and balances. As the president carries his message of greater burden-sharing to Brussels, he and his counterparts should **urge a recommitment to the alliance’s democratic values**.

To reverse the democratic backsliding among its members, NATO states will have to think creatively. One proposal suggests abandoning NATO’s consensus rule, whereby the alliance’s substantial decisions require unanimous consent, in favor of the European Union’s “qualified majority” voting mechanism. As Celeste Wallander, a former senior director for Russia and Central Asia affairs on the National Security Council, writes for Foreign Affairs, “If the cohort of backsliders grows, NATO may find itself with a bloc within the alliance bent on protecting illiberal democracy.” Most E.U. decisions require a “qualified majority,” the agreement of 55 percent of member states representing 65 percent of the E.U. population for a proposal to pass. If the E.U. rule were adopted by NATO, this would allow a supermajority of alliance states to pressure backsliding members much as the E.U. has been doing with Poland, whose government is attempting to undermine the independence of the country’s judiciary. NATO could also allocate greater resources to monitoring and reporting on the democratic practices of all aspiring and current alliance members, in the same way that another transatlantic, intergovernmental body, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, does, issuing regular reports on electoral transparency.

Multilateral institutions alone, however, cannot solve a problem of this magnitude; domestic forces in each member state will ultimately be their own best defense against democratic decline. On a bilateral basis, **individual** NATO **governments must bolster pro-democracy forces** and democratic institutions **inside other member states**, reemphasizing the values dimension that undergirds what is primarily a security alliance. This support could include revoking travel rights of corrupt officials, increasing funding for independent media and doubling down on efforts to promote free and fair elections.

Since it was founded in the ashes of World War II, NATO has helped ensure the greatest period of global peace and prosperity. It’s no exaggeration to say that NATO is the most successful military alliance in history; not once has a member state faced the conventional invasion of its territory. But as threats to liberal values emerge from within, **NATO’s mission of safeguarding democracy** from external assault will be for **naught if the alliance fails to uphold democracy at home**.

2 – Ukraine thumps – sapped Russia’s military capabilities and even if Putin’s scared of democracy, Ukraine proves that he doesn’t have the capabilities to escalate a large-scale nuclear conflict

3 – BUT the aff links more – Putin’s more afraid of NATO – the plan’s unconditionality is perceived as boundless NATO expansion, the counterplan’s conditionality isn’t:

#### The aff uniquely antagonizes Russia

Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky 19, Rumer, former national intelligence officer for Russia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie’s Russia and Eurasia Program; Sokolsky, senior fellow in Carnegie’s Russia and Eurasia Program, 6-20-19, “Thirty Years of U.S. Policy Toward Russia: Can the Vicious Circle Be Broken?” <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/06/20/thirty-years-of-u.s.-policy-toward-russia-can-vicious-circle-be-broken-pub-79323>, jy

NATO EXPANSION—TOWARD OR AGAINST RUSSIA?

Another constant feature of U.S. policy toward Russia has been the primacy of NATO as the cornerstone of the post–Cold War European security architecture, including its expansion to some of the former Soviet states. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO enlargement has been the principal instrument of U.S. security policy in Europe and Eurasia. It reflects a U.S. commitment to a whole, free, democratic, and peaceful Europe, as well as a view that the alliance should serve as the vehicle of the continent’s post–Cold War transformation. What went largely unnoticed were Moscow’s warnings beginning in 1994 that a “whole Europe” was not compatible with an expanding NATO, which would never be open to Russia.

Although NATO’s expansion has not necessarily been directed against Russia, it has negatively affected the Kremlin’s assessment of U.S. motivations and intentions and has been met with strong objections from Russians across the political spectrum. NATO enlargement also has shaped Russia’s perceptions of its own security requirements, which have had a profound impact on East-West relations. The issue is whether the U.S. transatlantic commitment necessitates the alliance’s continued eastward expansion and Open Door policy.31

The Clinton administration launched NATO expansion in 1997 when it led the alliance to offer memberships to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary—a policy that the George W. Bush and Obama administrations subsequently embraced. In addition to extending a security umbrella to former Soviet bloc countries, NATO membership encouraged their domestic postcommunist transition to democracy. NATO was and remains an alliance based on shared democratic values. And since, as Clinton declared in his 1994 State of the Union address, “democracies do not attack each other,” the democratic transitions of new NATO members would strengthen European security. In this way, NATO also became an instrument of democracy promotion.32

Map

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Russia has opposed NATO enlargement almost from the time it was raised as a possibility in the early 1990s.33 The Kremlin has maintained that NATO’s push to the east threatened Russian security and the alliance’s central role in Europe’s security architecture marginalized Russia as a nonmember. However, Russia’s objections proved insufficient to halt the alliance’s expansion; most officials and observers in the West treated such opinions as remnants of the old Soviet ideology that Russia would shed as it transitioned to a free market, liberal democracy. For those who did not believe that Russia would make this transition, NATO expansion made all the more sense as a hedge against Russia reemerging as a threat to Europe—a prospect that loomed ever larger as Russia recovered a good measure of its economic health, authoritarian-leaning domestic politics, and geopolitical ambitions.34 In 2007, Putin personally delivered an ominous warning to NATO not to expand further east, though most in the West regarded such rhetoric as an outdated blast from the Cold War era.35 Even though the alliance’s dual purpose—as a defense organization and instrument of democracy promotion—had emerged as a major irritant in the United States’ relations with Russia, Putin’s warning effectively was dismissed.36

In 2008, NATO promised membership to Ukraine and Georgia, crossing the red line that Putin had drawn around the territory of the former Soviet states.37 In the eyes of U.S. policymakers, NATO was in effect the only legitimate and viable security manager for Europe and Eurasia, and its expansion was the only sensible policy for the entire region.38 Putin’s response was the 2008 war with Georgia, which reaffirmed the red line around the former Soviet space, stopped NATO’s eastward expansion, and marked a major turning point in European security and in the relationship between NATO and Russia.39 In 2014, the annexation of Crimea and Russia’s undeclared war against Ukraine symbolized the end of the post–Cold War era and the reemergence of a new East-West divide in Europe.

Could this outcome have been avoided? NATO expansion undoubtedly benefited many countries of Central and Eastern Europe, providing a much-needed security framework for the region when it was left without one in the aftermath of the Cold War. It also played an important role in consolidating these former Soviet bloc countries’ transition from communism. But one size does not fit all. Political culture, history, geography, culture, and economic ties are crucially important in shaping individual countries’ trajectories. The ties between Georgia, Ukraine, and Russia—and Moscow’s strenuous objections to NATO membership for these former Soviet republics—mattered little to the George W. Bush administration or to the president, who reportedly lobbied for both countries to be admitted to NATO over many NATO allies’ major reservations.40

The promise of membership to Ukraine and Georgia—without a date or plan for their accession—was made as a compromise between Bush and many other NATO leaders, most notably German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who were opposed to the idea. The promise was vague and lacked concrete details. However, it was significant as a symbol of U.S. and NATO commitments to the policy of NATO’s eastward expansion regardless of any red lines drawn by Putin.

When Putin spoke about the breakup of the Soviet Union as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century, his message resonated with its intended domestic audience, reflecting widely held opinions among average Russians—a fact overlooked by Western policymakers.41 In retrospect, these warning signs were harbingers of future strife. But in the prevailing atmosphere of the West’s post–Cold War triumphalism, they were repeatedly dismissed as Russia’s atavistic attachment to an outdated, obsolete past rather than a vision of its future.42

With the 2008 promise of membership to Georgia and Ukraine, the United States led NATO across an invisible but distinct line. None of the other Soviet bloc countries that joined NATO after the Cold War had ties to Russia comparable to those of Ukraine and Georgia. The countries of Central Europe had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Poland reemerged as an independent state after World War I and had an adversarial relationship with the Soviet Union until it was crushed by Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. The Baltic states had long been part of the Russian Empire, but they had closer ties to the German than to the Russian world. Following two decades of independence, they were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1939, and they viewed Russia as an occupying power—a sentiment that survived Soviet occupation and propelled them to freedom in the late 1980s, helping to unravel the Soviet Union.

Ukraine and Georgia share a different history with Russia. Until 1991, Ukraine had been part of imperial and later Soviet Russia for more than three hundred years. It was the empire’s industrial heartland, home to its defense industry and breadbasket, and a bridge to the outside world. Georgia became a Russian protectorate in 1783 and part of the Russian Empire in 1801. Unlike the Baltic countries, both were integral parts of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, and although both countries gave rise to powerful independence movements and played critical roles in the dissolution of the USSR, many of those ties survive to the present day, even after Russia went to war against both countries to keep them in its orbit.43

NATO’s 2008 pledge of eventual membership to Georgia and Ukraine was a powerful restatement of its Open Door policy. For both countries—and perhaps for other Soviet states harboring similar hopes—it was taken as a Western promise to help them escape Russia’s orbit. But for Russia, it was seen as another perilous sign of NATO’s boundless ambitions, and it raised the prospect that it would lose control, or at least immediate influence, over two neighbors that it saw as critical to its security, well-being, and prestige as a major power.44 Given the alliance’s commitment to spreading democracy, Russia also perceived its neighbors’ intended accession as a threat to its domestic stability. Thus, the U.S. rejection of Russia’s geopolitical concerns as “atavistic” overlooked Russian sensitivities.45 Russia’s response to it was an outright repudiation of several key assumptions underpinning the original arguments for expansion—that Russia would gradually change its views, come to share the alliance’s founding values, and eventually accept NATO’s eastward push as it was intended by its proponents; in other words, Moscow would see expansion as a move toward Russia, rather than against it.

Russia’s opposition to NATO’s eastward push lived up to the expectations of those who argued for the expansion as a hedge against a resurgent, irredentist Russia. However, the architects of expansion had not thought through the consequences of that scenario. Having made the promise of membership to Georgia and Ukraine and encouraged their aspirations to join NATO, the alliance had not planned for and did not come to their defense when the two became victims of Russian aggression. The alliance had made a political but not legal commitment to their security. In effect, NATO chose to hide behind this narrow legalistic interpretation of its obligations to member states, rather than act upon the expansive political commitments that permeated the official declarations and speeches of its leaders.46

In choosing inaction, NATO reaffirmed what had long been obvious to many observers—that it was not committed to the two countries’ security. Russia’s wars against Georgia and Ukraine demonstrated the importance of interests as drivers of Russian, U.S., and NATO actions: Russia had more at stake in both Georgia and Ukraine than the United States and NATO and was prepared to go to war to protect those equities. The United States and its NATO allies did not see their stake in Ukraine and Georgia, or their commitment to shared values, as important enough to warrant war with Russia.

Moreover, in promising membership to Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO in the first place, the leaders of the alliance seemed to overlook the importance of geography. Even the most ardent advocates of NATO expansion recognize now that geographic proximity to Russia has been a powerful obstacle to realizing their aspirations of NATO membership and the alliance’s eastward push. Russia’s proximity to both countries has endowed it with a formidable military advantage, and the alliance would face a daunting challenge in overcoming that advantage if it chose to come to either country’s defense in a conflict with Russia. That challenge has been made abundantly clear by the ongoing discussion among defense experts about how the alliance would be able to defend the Baltic states in a hypothetical future conflict with Russia, given the latter’s overwhelming geographic advantages in such a conflict.47

Finally, the costs and benefits to the alliance of NATO enlargement, as well as the overall geopolitical context, have changed since the early 1990s in two fundamental ways. First, the promise of a Europe whole, free, and at peace with itself and its neighbors, which seemed within reach in the aftermath of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, has been replaced with a new division in Europe between Russia and NATO. Several countries that belong to neither camp are now stuck in a geopolitical no man’s land, unwilling to return to Russia’s sphere of influence but unable to reach out to an alliance whose promises of protection are vague at best. Second, at the time of NATO’s first wave of enlargement in the 1990s, the prospect of a NATO-Russia military confrontation seemed to have been relegated to Europe’s past, and NATO was preparing to go “out of area.”48 Today, NATO officials and military planners are deeply preoccupied with augmenting capabilities to defend alliance territory against Russian aggression. As a consequence, the costs of opening NATO’s door to Europe’s east have risen dramatically with respect to new members and aspiring applicants. With the alliance focused on dealing with the new division of Europe and the adversarial relationship with Russia, the prospect of membership for Georgia and Ukraine has been pushed into a distant, indefinite future.