



Points, Counterpoints, and Starting Points

By

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The 28-point Ukraine peace plan the [Trump administration recently delivered](#) is highly problematic for a number of reasons. The document's starting point, endpoint, and very premise raise concern for anyone sympathetic to Ukraine. The plan's bias toward Russia explains why a [counterproposal](#) was drafted by Britain, France, and Germany. The following review of the original plan serves to underscore why these nations responded so rapidly.

According to [Reuters](#), the first point calls for "Ukraine's sovereignty to be reconfirmed." It does this by partitioning a sovereign state victimized by unprovoked aggression. Equally odd is the fact that the agreement would be signed by a regime in Moscow that does not recognize Ukraine as a sovereign state.

The second point suggests, "There will be a total and complete comprehensive non-aggression agreement between Russia, Ukraine and Europe." However, such agreements were in force in 2014 when Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his first invasion of Ukraine.

In 1994, Russia [pledged](#) to "refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine." In 1997, Russia signed a [treaty](#) with Ukraine pledging "mutual respect, sovereign equality, territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders, the peaceful settlement of disputes, [and] the non-use of force or threat of force." Russia violated all of these pledges.

The third point suggests "There will be the expectation that Russia will not invade its neighbors, and NATO will not expand further." In addition to the 1994 and 1997 agreements, the United Nations Charter and Helsinki Final Act include the "expectation" that Russia does not invade its neighbors. Russia currently occupies parts of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) embraces an open-door policy. Any external limitation on this policy impinges upon NATO's independence, encroaches on the sovereignty of 32 member-states, sentences NATO aspirants to Russian vassalage, and serves as a green light to further Russian aggression.

Putin and his defenders believe Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022 because Ukraine wanted to join NATO, but they have it precisely backwards; Ukraine wanted to join NATO because Putin invaded in 2014. Sovereign nations seek NATO membership because they distrust Moscow and view NATO as the surest route to security in Europe.

The fourth point stipulates, "A dialogue between Russia and NATO, moderated by the United States, will convene to address all security concerns and create a de-escalatory environment." The US is a founding member of NATO—not a disinterested third party. To suggest the US could be a moderator between NATO's chief adversary and NATO's members is to undermine NATO's unity.

The fifth point states, "Ukraine will receive robust security guarantees." The guarantees are not robust by any reasonable definition of the term. They are limited and conditional.

To make matters worse, point six stipulates that, "The size of the Ukrainian Armed Forces will be capped at 600,000." This undermines Ukraine's sovereignty. Given Russia's size, capabilities, actions, and aims, agreeing to this would jeopardize Ukraine's future security.

The seventh point requires that “Ukraine agrees to enshrine in its constitution that it will not join NATO, and NATO agrees to pass in its bylaws not to accept Ukraine at any point in the future.” Not only did Putin make these [demands](#) before his 2022 assault on Ukraine, but it is now known that this 28-point plan is based on Russian [proposals](#).

The eighth point guarantees that “NATO agrees not to station any troops in Ukraine.” This obliterates the notion of robust security guarantees and would leave Ukraine exposed to further Russian aggression. NATO members, if not NATO itself, will need to play a role in postwar Ukraine’s security.

The ninth point states that “European fighter-jets will be stationed in Poland.” The use of “European” here, rather than “NATO,” raises further questions about the transatlantic bond, which has ensured deterrence in Europe since NATO’s founding. Are we to infer that US fighter-jets will not be stationed in [Poland](#)? They are there now on a [rotational basis](#).

The tenth point states that American security guarantees are forfeit “if Ukraine invades Russia” or “fires a missile at Moscow or St. Petersburg.” This is gratuitous. Ukraine did not invade Russia in 2014 or 2022. Ukraine’s incursions and missile-strikes in Russia are a response to Russian aggression.

The thirteenth point states that Russia will be “re-integrated into the global economy” and “invited back into the G8.” Russia was expelled from the G8 because it invaded Ukraine in 2014. It is important to remember that the G7 was founded as a club of wealthy, industrialized, free-market democracies. Yeltsin’s Russia was none of those when it was invited into the G7 in 1998. Putin’s Russia is none of those today.

The fifteenth point says, “A joint US-Russian security taskforce will be established to promote and enforce compliance with all of the provisions of this agreement.” Elevating Russia to the status of American security partner ignores the fact that Russia is the main threat to the security of Ukraine and the rest of Europe. Sidelining NATO from any role in postwar security shows a disregard for the transatlantic community, for NATO’s capabilities in peacekeeping operations, and for NATO’s postwar planning.

The drafters of the 28-point plan are oblivious of the fact that NATO has an entire [command](#) focused on security assistance and training for Ukraine and that the British army developed plans to lead a [multinational force in Ukraine](#). Are they opposed to NATO playing those roles?

The seventeenth point stipulates that “The United States and Russia will agree to extend nuclear non-proliferation control treaties, including the START I Treaty. This is fine in theory, but Russia is in violation of numerous arms-control treaties that served as the foundation of post-Cold War stability and security in Europe.

The eighteenth point is particularly troublesome for Ukraine. It requires, “Ukraine agrees to be a non-nuclear state.” In 1994, Ukraine surrendered its entire nuclear arsenal in exchange for Russia’s commitment to respect Ukraine’s “sovereignty” and “existing borders.” The free world’s failure to back up those words after Putin’s 2014 invasion not only set the stage for 2022, it crippled the cause of nuclear nonproliferation.

Russia’s war on Ukraine serves as an object lesson of the deterrent power of nuclear weapons—and the danger of not having them. [Ukraine](#), [South Korea](#), [Poland](#), and others are pondering that lesson.

The twentieth point calls on Ukraine and Russia to “commit to education programs in schools and throughout their society that promote the understanding and tolerance of different cultures” and for “all Nazi ideology...renounced and forbidden.” Of course, Putin has [pushed](#) the

lie that Ukraine is “not a real country,” that Ukraine was “entirely created by Russia,” and that Ukraine is [governed](#) by “a gang of drug addicts and neo-Nazis.” The irony about “Nazi ideology” is that by concocting phantom enemies, rewriting history, trying to rebuild a dead empire, and waging aggressive war, Putin is the one who is imitating the Nazis.

The twenty-first point recognizes Russian control over the territories it currently occupies; requires Ukrainian forces to withdraw from their own territory, which “they currently control;” and calls for that territory to be turned into a “demilitarized buffer zone.”

The twenty-second point calls on Russia and Ukraine “not to change these arrangements by force.” Force is the only language Putin understands. He has employed military force in Ukraine and Georgia and is probing NATO with [drone attacks](#) and [sabotage operations](#).

The twenty-third point stipulates that “Russia shall not obstruct Ukraine’s use of the Dnieper River.” This underscores the perverse nature of this document. Russia should have no role, no say, and no ability to obstruct Ukraine’s use of the hundreds of miles of the Dnieper River that run through the heart of Ukraine.

The twenty-fourth point establishes “a humanitarian committee” to deal with issues related to prisoners, hostages, and “family reunification.” Such initiatives are only necessary because Russia abducted [Ukrainian children](#); imprisoned Ukrainian civilians in “[filtration camps](#);” and forcibly transferred [thousands of Ukrainians](#) to Russia.

Point twenty-five demands that Ukraine hold elections within 100 days. This echoes [Putin’s talking points](#). The only way Ukraine and its NATO partners should agree to this is if Russia also holds OSCE-monitored elections within 100 days.

The twenty-sixth point declares that “All parties involved in this conflict will receive full amnesty for wartime actions.” This is another bonus for bad behavior. There would be no need for amnesty were it not for Putin’s [war crimes](#).

The first of these crimes is the very way the war started; the 2014 assault on Crimea and the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine constitute a war of aggression. However, that was only the beginning of Putin’s war crimes, which include targeting [hospitals](#), [population centers](#), and [energy, food, and water](#) supplies; destroying [schools](#) and [places of worship](#); [torturing and massacring](#) civilians; and conducting a campaign of [sexual violence](#).

Point twenty-seven declares the agreement will be “monitored and guaranteed by a Board of Peace, chaired by President Donald J. Trump.” The president of the United States has plenty of responsibilities to occupy his attention. Proconsul of postwar Ukraine should not be added to that list.

Finally, point twenty-eight calls for a ceasefire once the parties agree to the plan. The good news is that the plan presented by Washington is a dead letter. The better news is that European leaders used it as a starting point for a [peace initiative](#) that focuses on Ukraine’s sovereignty, Europe’s security, and NATO’s unity. Let’s hope a US-Europe compromise plan will emerge that brings Ukraine a step closer to an endpoint all people of goodwill can agree on, a sovereign and secure Ukraine in a stable and peaceful Europe.

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