



## Pence fails to see nuance in Ukraine war, sides with military-industrial complex

### Description

#### OPINION:

In an attempt to preclude any questions about our involvement in the war in Ukraine, former Vice President Mike Pence said a few days ago: “There can be no room in the leadership of the Republican Party for apologists for Putin. There can only be room for champions of freedom.”

Let’s assume Mr. Pence was perhaps imprecise in expressing himself.

A man as intellectually and professionally accomplished as Mr. Pence must surely understand that there is a chasm between harboring reservations about the extent of our ever-widening involvement in that conflict and support for Russian dictator Vladimir Putin. What being a “champion of freedom” (whatever that might be) has to do with either of those things is unclear.

One can believe that we are way out over our skis (with plans to go even further out there) with respect to Ukraine and that Mr. Putin is a bad person with bad intentions. The two are not, as young people might say, mutually exclusive.

The reality is that in a matter of months, we have gone from a policy of providing no offensive weapons to the Ukrainians to shipping them tanks to having people who should know better — like Republican Rep. Michael McCaul, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee — banging around about shipping them F-16s. What could possibly go wrong? At what point do we start talking about sending over cruise missiles?

We are already supplying weapons, ammunition, targeting and real-time battlefield intelligence to Ukraine. The line between providing “assistance” and being an actual combatant nation is becoming very, very diaphanous.

It would be one thing if we were one of many countries providing such military aid. The reality is that the Europeans have produced mostly conversation. The United States has given more to Ukraine — about 50% more — than every nation in Europe combined.

Moreover, as part of the war effort, the United States — by expediting the shipping of liquefied natural gas — has helped the Europeans reduce their reliance on Russian natural gas. Unfortunately, those (especially in Asia) who were planning on receiving that natural gas were outbid by the Europeans. Tough luck. They're victims of the Americans once again covering for bad European planning.

It would be one thing if Team Biden had ever articulated how they imagine this story ends beyond the Disney-like version in which Ukraine "wins" and everyone lives happily ever after. But the failure of the Biden administration to explain the endgame in Ukraine and how we get there also encourages caution about our involvement with this war.

In defense of that caution, it is important to remember that Team Biden has a history of difficulty with exits from sticky wars. Just ask the Afghans.

The disconnect between the apologists for the American war machine and the voters has become obvious enough that a few days ago, The New York Times reported that "supporters of more aid fear the centrifugal forces of the emerging presidential contest and growing taxpayer fatigue with shipping tens of billions of dollars overseas may undercut the war effort before Moscow can be defeated."

In other words, once the presidential election campaign starts in earnest, voters may start to more closely scrutinize the extent and cost of our nation's involvement. The American people — rightfully focused on their own problems — are unlikely to continue writing checks to Ukraine and edging closer to real war indefinitely.

The reporter also referred to Russia being "defeated." That is an interesting thread. Let's pull on it. In January, Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said: "I still maintain that for this year it would be very, very difficult to militarily eject the Russian forces from all — every inch of Ukraine and occupied — or Russian-occupied Ukraine."

Given that, it seems safe to say that Ukraine is not going to be able to invade Russia and destroy it. The Russians may or may not be able to destroy Ukraine. That suggests that someone — other than communist China — should start talking about a negotiated ending to the war.

If you're not a little worried about all of this, Mr. Pence, you are probably an apologist for Mr. Biden's adventurism in Ukraine.

*by Michael McKenna*

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