

Who Gains from a Forever War in Ukraine?

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The newly elected president of the Czech Republic Petr Pavel is an unusual European politician. He is the second president in his country with a military background but the first without political experience.

He never saw combat duty and is an arm chair military strategist but lionised as a "senior NATO leader" — whatever that may mean. The high noon of Pavel's professional career in the military was reached in 1993 when while serving in the UN Protection Force in Bosnia, he led a team of 29 soldiers to evacuate a French military outpost under siege by Serbian soldiers, which he executed after overcoming obstacles that slowed down the operation such as fallen trees which his soldiers had to remove from the road. France decorated Pavel.

At any rate, the 61-year old soldier-politician has hit the road running when barely 7 weeks into his new job as head of state, Pavel threw a curve ball claiming China cannot be a reliable mediator between Russia and Ukraine due to Beijing's secret craving for "more war."

Pavel assessed that China gets cheap oil, gas, and other resources from Moscow in exchange for promises of "partnership" and its interest lies in prolonging the status quo "because it can push Russia to a number of concessions."

[These remarks](#) could have been dismissed as those of a greenhorn but for his fame as a "senior NATO leader" and the Czech Republic's reputation as a chattel and cats-paw of Washington. Hence the big question: What is Biden administration up to?

The obvious thing will be that Pavel's remark on "cheap" oil and gas from Russia to China is a gross simplification of a complicated story. Europe was receiving Russian gas and oil for decades at low prices on the basis of long-term contracts until the EU, under American pressure, took the idiotic decision to sanction Russia.

Whereupon, Russia turned to other markets, principally Asian, China being one of them. The rest is history. What's the point of sitting upon the ground and telling sad stories?

Europeans should feel worried that even after the war ends, once Russia diversifies its export markets, they may never again get "cheap" Russian gas. (By the way, China is not the only beneficiary, as Europeans who continue to buy Russian oil and petroleum products from Indian companies at much higher prices would know!)

Pavel spoke in the context of the expected [announcement by Joe Biden](#) seeking the presidency once again in 2024. One hugely consequential part of Biden's announcement on Tuesday is that the prospect of the Ukraine war ending between now and 2024 November elections in the US can now be deemed as practically nil.

The only way it can happen otherwise is if the US outright wins the war and candidate Biden claims victory. But the reaction from Moscow shows that what is in the cards is an escalation in Ukraine that is fraught with [great risk of a direct conflict](#) between Russia and the US.

Top Kremlin officials came out on Tuesday with a spate of statements on an impending showdown with the Biden administration. The Russian media disclosed that Russia's new state-of-the-art [Armata T-14 main battle tank](#) has been deployed on the Ukrainian front lines.

Moscow anticipates large scale US interference in Russia's internal politics to create conditions that would undermine the country's stability, as part of a grand design to trigger a break-up of the Russian Federation, as had happened to the former Soviet Union. ([here](#))

Moscow estimates that the Biden administration will try hard to bring about a regime change in the Kremlin. Above all, Moscow no longer rules out that the US escalation in Ukraine may aim to create conditions posing grave threat to the Russian state. ([here](#))

The former president Dmitry Medvedev vividly spoke of such a [scenario warning explicitly](#) that Russia may be compelled to resort to first use of nuclear arms if its existence is threatened, underscoring that paragraph 19 of the country's nuclear doctrine states that nuclear weapons "can be used when aggression is carried out against Russia with the use of other types of weapons that endanger the very existence of the state. It is essentially the use of nuclear weapons in response to such actions. Our potential adversaries should not underestimate this."

Specifically, with reference to Biden's mental health and failing faculties, Medvedev also tweeted:

"Biden has made the decision, after all. A daring geezer. In place of the American military, I would immediately make a fake trunk with false nuclear codes in case he wins, so as to avoid fatal consequences."

On the other hand, the spectre that haunts the Biden administration is that Europe cannot easily extricate itself from its relationship with China and it is the interests of Old Europe's economic heartlands that will ultimately determine EU policy.

Make no mistake, just 3 countries of Old Europe — France, Italy and Germany — account for more than a half of EU's GDP and they also happen to be China's largest trading partners in

the EU. Amidst the brouhaha over French President Emmanuel Macron's recent endorsement of a close industrial relationship with China, what has gone unnoticed is that German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is on the same page as Macron. Equally so with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. The European industry is also loathe to lose China as a privileged trading partner, after having lost Britain and Russia.

New Europeans like Pavel may have different priorities, being the strongest trans-atlanticists in the EU, but East Europe makes up just 10% of the EU's GDP and does not speak for the EU, despite the media hype its leaders have lately enjoyed as "frontline states", due to the Anglo-American patronage.

Suffice to say, there is trepidation in the American mind as to whether the EU will follow the US into a confrontational position with China in the coming months, or would strive to become more independent of the US, with all the consequences that would ensue. Equally, from the viewpoint of Old Europe, the gnawing doubt is whether a future US administration would want to align with Europe even if Europe were to align with the US.

On balance, it is difficult to visualise the EU fully aligning with the US in an all-out conflict with China over Taiwan, agree to freeze Chinese official reserves as it did last year with Russia, and stop investing in China.

The EU economy is simply not built for cold-war style relations, as it has become too dependent on global supply chains. All things taken into account, therefore, the strong likelihood is that the pro-China lobby in Germany will win this debate. In fact, in the process, the Franco-German alliance may be rekindled, too.

Pavel's demonisation of China as an evil spirit stalking Europe can be put in perspective. His is a surrogate voice mouthing Biden's angst that as the Ukrainian military is comprehensively ground down in the battlefields by the Russian forces in the months ahead, Europe may join hands with China to bring the war to an end.

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Featured image: Russia's T-14 Armata Next Gen. Tank Deployed to Ukrainian Frontlines (Source: IP)

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