Opinion

NCR Voices



President Donald Trump delivers remarks at a Turning Point USA event at Dream City Church in Phoenix, Arizona on April 17, 2026. (Flickr/The White House/Daniel Torok)



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The good news is that President Donald Trump's fear of losing the midterms due to high gas prices has made him reluctant to renew attacks on Iran. "Wait 'til you see prices fall," Trump told a crowd in Phoenix. "Did you see oil is down today, and prices are down?" Unfortunately for GOP candidates, the president offered that prediction on April 17; it is now May 11, and we are all still waiting for those prices to come down. Hence, extended ceasefire and negotiations.

Trump campaigned on the promise that he would fix high prices and avoid foreign wars. Instead, he has embroiled the nation in a war that has failed to meet any of the president's own stated criteria for attacking Iran. No one knows the status of Iran's nuclear program, but you can bet the regime is more determined than ever to acquire a nuke. The regime, which had to kill thousands of its own people in January to suppress protesters clamoring for change, has only strengthened its control over the citizenry. Nothing unites a country like an attack from an outsider. It appears that the president and his clownish cabinet thought of none of this before they started attacking Iran.

On March 3, the president said the U.S. had no choice but to attack Iran because they were going to attack us first. "You see, we were having negotiations with these lunatics, and it was my opinion that they were going to attack first. They were going to attack. If we didn't do it, they were going to attack first. I felt strongly about that," the president affirmed even though there is no evidence Iran possessed a nuclear weapon or the means to deliver it.

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N.B. Israel has a different calculation to make about war with Iran and the prospect of the Iranian regime acquiring a nuclear weapon. The theocrats in Iran are openly pledged to destroy the state of Israel, and no one should doubt their sincerity. They have funded the proxies which have attacked Israel relentlessly and the terrorists

who, for example, killed 85 Jews, and wounded 300 more, in Buenos Aires in 1994. Iran has jerked America around since 1979 when the mullahs came to power but it has actively prosecuted a war against Israel.

Now, if you are reading NCR, chances are you are a reasonably informed person who knows that the president was mistaken when he said Iran was poised to attack us with nuclear weapons first. But, some of his supporters believe what the man says. For them, if Trump said Iran was about to hurl a nuke into the U.S., they think it was.

Which brings us to the bad news: President Donald Trump's fear of losing the midterms due to high gas prices has made him reluctant to renew attacks on Iran. It is good that Trump's political self-interest makes peace more likely. But the world is concluding that the American electorate is unwilling to make any sacrifices for the national interest.

Most people who oppose the war do so for good reasons. It is unjust. It is a war of choice. It is counterproductive. But it is frightening that some Americans, some who voted for Trump, some who resented the cultural left's denigration of American icons like Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, citizens who are more likely to have a family member in the military, if those people turn against the war because of higher gas prices, we really have become a pathetic nation. And the Democrats? For every one Democrat who complains the war is unjust, there are ten who complain about gas prices.

I have written previously about the Harvard memorial chapel which was dedicated to the memory of the 373 Harvard students and alumni who died fighting in the First World War. A plaque honoring the 697 Harvard students killed during World War II was added later. There are only 22 names on the plaque for Harvard students who died in Vietnam. "This is not a mark of societal health," I noted. "The specialization of labor is one thing but the hiring out of national purpose is another."



President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump attend the Dignified Transfer of remains of six U.S. soldiers killed in an Iranian drone strike in Kuwait on March 7, 2026, at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. (Flickr/The White House/Daniel Torok)

In 1936, in explaining why the British government had failed to keep its pledge to maintain air superiority over Nazi Germany, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin told the House of Commons: "Supposing I had gone to the country and said that Germany was rearming and that we must rearm, does anybody think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to that cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain."

Commenting on the prime minister's remarks, Winston Churchill wrote: "That a Prime Minister should avow that he had not done his duty in regard to national safety because he was afraid of losing the election was an incident without parallel in our parliamentary history." Now, I fear, at least in this country, what was then without parallel is now the expected behavior.

During World War II, all Americans rationed a variety of things from coffee to rubber to help the war effort. Millions of Americans bought Liberty bonds. Young men pretended to be older than they were so they could enlist. Today, in opposing the war in Iran, politicians highlight gas prices, not the failure to meet the criteria of just war. Instead of "we are better than this" we get "Trump promised to lower prices."

This lack of moral vigor in our polity is certainly not limited to the threat of foreign war. Think of those who whined about restrictions on their behavior during the pandemic. Think of those wealthy people who undertake complex legal and financial arrangements to avoid paying taxes. What are we willing to sacrifice to confront the coming challenges posed by climate change?

In 1959, John Steinbeck wrote to Adlai Stevenson: "If I wanted to destroy a nation, I would give it too much and I would have it on its knees, miserable, greedy, and sick." We have been given too much as a nation. The war in Iran is the wrong war, but would it matter if it were a just or necessary war, or other kind of crisis? Would we Americans rise to the occasion? I am not so sure. Donald Trump is devaluing authentic patriotism and national purpose before our eyes.