

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

BY DAVE LINDORFF

07.02.2021

Back to Cold War 2.0



Photograph Source: Rave – [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

A fawning liberal media and a passel of well-endowed ‘peace’ organizations like Plowshares and Council for a Livable World and self-described “progressive” organizations like MoveOn have been hailing Biden’s cabinet picks, many of them veterans of the Obama administration, claiming they will steer the US in a new direction under which diplomacy, not bluster and military threats, will be the default policy.

And yet right out of the box we see the Biden administration “demanding” that Russia release Putin critic and political challenger Alexey Navalny from a just-ordered 32-month sentence reportedly for jumping bail and leaving the country? Is that supposed to be diplomacy? Is Moscow likely to cave in to such an imperious demand? Is the US prepared to act in some fashion to enforce its demand?

Of course not. Typically on issues like his, at least with the US, one sees sanctions being placed on the offending country, or on individuals in power. But while that tactic might cause

enough pain to get results against some third world country, it doesn't work so well when the target is a nation like Russia, which doesn't do much business with the US, which has reduced its holdings of US debt significantly and that has actually been with other countries to develop a banking system that doesn't rely on US banks. Furthermore, Russia has a product — oil and especially natural gas — which Europe is hungry for.

Making threatening-sounding demands doesn't work either when the target country has a long history of resisting being pushed around.

Now if Secretary of State Antony Blinken seriously wants to engage in diplomacy, he should start off the new US Biden administration's relationship with Moscow not by making a blustery demand it cannot enforce (and especially not on behalf of [a man who is hardly a paragon of democratic values!](#)). He should instead offer a carrot of some kind, which could then be withheld. Perhaps he posits such a carrot is President Biden's offer over the phone to President Vladimir Putin to extend the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT). This decades old pact reached by President Ronald Reagan and Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev is set to expire in three days, potentially setting off a new arms race in nuclear warheads, bombs and intercontinental missiles.

But using that treaty as a carrot would make no sense. Putin, a seasoned international leader, knows the US needs SALT renewed as much as Russia does. The Doomsday Clock was just moved down to 100 seconds by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, and more weapons of ultimate destruction are the last thing either country or the rest of the world needs. Even more massive military spending is also the last thing Biden needs as he tries to come up with funding to tackle a pandemic, seriously attack climate change, and prop up a staggering economy with record unemployment.

So what gives here? Is this just more Cold War posturing of the kind we saw so often under Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, George HW Bush, Clinton, GW Bush and Obama and, in North Korea, China and Venezuela at least, Trump?

Seems like it.

Meanwhile, isn't there some major hypocrisy going on here when the US has the world's largest prison population in the world (2.3 million currently incarcerated [with as many as 24 million more struggling to survive as unemployable felons](#) who have served time in this nation's vast prison industrial complex and have either completed their sentences or are out on parole)? More to the point, isn't the US still hounding journalist Julian Assange, keeping him locked up in the hell hole of a British prison while appeals a decision blocking his extradition to face espionage charges in the US for, among other things, exposing war crimes by US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq?

There is apparently no recognition in the White House or the State Department of the huge irony that the charge the UK is using to accommodate the US and continue holding Assange, whom a British magistrate already ruled could not be extradited to the US, is for having

jumped bail (in a case that has long ago been dropped by Swedish prosecutors). That's the same "crime," in other words, that the US is demanding that Russia release Navalny for committing.

Now here's how to be diplomatic, Secretary Blinken: Propose that if Russia releases Navalny and drops its charges against him, the US will drop its (let's face it, embarrassing and trumped up) espionage charge against Assange and concede the loss of its extradition case. Of course, at this point, Russia might up the ante and suggest that the US also drop its similarly outrageous charges against Edward Snowden. You remember him I'm sure. He's the NSA whistleblower who has been a guest of Russia, which in 2013 offered him asylum from US espionage and other charges that had led to his passport being revoked while he was transiting through Moscow enroute to asylum in Ecuador.

You and President Biden might win diplomatic points by suggesting such a deal. Doing so would go a little way towards restoring the US's currently tattered reputation as a land where freedom of the press is honored, while also getting credit for winning Navalny's release, while vastly improving US-Russian relations.

That, sirs, is how diplomacy works, not by blustering and making demands that can you cannot expect will gain you anything.

FEBRUARY 5, 2021

Dave Lindorff is a founding member of [ThisCantBeHappening!](#), an online newspaper collective, and is a contributor to [Hopeless: Barack Obama and the Politics of Illusion](#) (AK Press).