

Meet Me in Geneva. Biden's Russophobia Means the Summit Will Fail.

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With the exception of his perseverance in a long overdue withdrawal from Afghanistan, President Joe Biden has been assiduously pursuing policies that make the world a more dangerous place for Americans, up to and including opening up the country's southern border to waves of illegal immigration. Ironically, if an opinion poll were to be taken in the United States it would likely show that most respondents regard the Republicans as America's designated conflict-friendly party based on the fact that the GOP is considered to be more "conservative" and therefore more likely to resort to force. But that assumption is not actually true as the Republican Party historically has been reluctant to embrace foreign engagements while presidents like Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and even Donald Trump were measured in their responses to developing international crisis situations. Trump, for all his aggressive language and several missteps, actually started no new wars and may even have been genuine in his desire to extricate from foreign conflicts only to be circumvented by his advisers and the entrenched government bureaucracy. He was widely condemned as a "Putin puppet" even though the bilateral relationship actually worsened during his time in office due to his inability to overcome the Establishment forces lined up against him.

Historically speaking, it is the Democrats who can be credited with conniving to enter both the First and Second World Wars while more recently entering into wars that served absolutely no national interest in places like Libya and Syria. They can also get credit for increasing the use of one-off cruise missile attacks supplemented by terrorism-like tactics that might reasonably be construed as war crimes, to include killing civilians using drones based solely on the target fitting a "profile."

It might be reasonably argued that Washington has only one really important bilateral relationship and that is with Russia since Moscow alone has the capability to destroy the United States. There too it was the Democrats who seemingly deliberately sought to turn a post-Cold War reconstruction of Russia into a looting of the country's natural resources combined with an encroachment of NATO right up to the Russian border, both initiated and implemented under Bill Clinton. The relationship has been suffering ever since, nearly leading to war when Barack Obama's Administration spend \$5 billion overthrowing a government friendly to Russia in Kiev in 2014. Russia has repeatedly claimed, not without

some justification, that successive American administrations have continued that process, using various means to undermine and replace the Putin government.

The Democrats also were the driving force behind the Magnitsky Act, which was sponsored by Russia-phobic Senator Ben Cardin and signed by President Barack Obama in 2012. Using the Act, the US asserted its willingness to punish foreign governments, particularly Russia, using sanctions and other means for claimed violations of human rights. Russia reacted angrily, noting that the actions taken by its government internally, notably the operation of its judiciary, were being subjected to outside interference. It reciprocated with sanctions against US officials as well as by increasing pressure on foreign non-governmental pro-democracy groups and western media operating in Russia, which meant that the Act was actually counter-productive. Tension between Moscow and Washington increased considerably as a result and Congress subsequently approved a so-called Global Magnitsky Act as part of the 2016 annual defense appropriation bill. It expanded the use of sanctions and other punitive measures against regimes guilty of egregious human rights abuses though it has never been applied against well documented serial human rights violators like Saudi Arabia and Israel. It was also sponsored by Senator Ben Cardin and was clearly intended to threaten Russia.

More recently there has been the totally fabricated Russiagate that was intended to place the blame for Hillary Clinton's defeat by Donald Trump on the Kremlin and Russian President Vladimir Putin. And the pro-Democratic Party media has been working hard to come up with other "news" pieces that depict Moscow as the enemy du jour, including the now discredited claim that the Kremlin has been paying Afghan fighters "bounties" to kill American soldiers.

Now Joe Biden is preparing to meet with Vladimir Putin in Geneva on June 16th and the prospects are not good even if one discounts Biden's having labeled Putin as a "killer" lacking "soul" as little more than hyperbole. The meeting was requested after a phone call to Putin arranged by Biden in April, at a particularly tense moment when Ukraine was threatening to retake the Crimea from Russia, using its supply of lethal weaponry from the United States to do the job. Washington and the NATO alliance also declared that their support for Kiev was "unwavering" even though they recognized that Ukraine would have little to no chance of defeating the Russian army. The Kremlin responded to the threat by rushing troops to its border and the US sent warships to Turkey to enter the Black Sea, though it quickly withdrew them when Putin made clear that their appearance offshore of Russian territory would be considered a major provocation.

Some rational voices in the US government are, however, prepared to step back from the precipice. William Burns, currently Director of the CIA and Ambassador to Russia under George W. Bush, reported concisely how Moscow viewed the Ukraine situation. He observed in a cable entitled "NYET MEANS NYET: RUSSIA'S NATO ENLARGEMENT REDLINES" that "Russia would view further eastward expansion as a potential military threat. NATO enlargement, particularly to Ukraine, remains 'an emotional and neuralgic' issue for Russia..." But even the *New York Times* is having difficulty in finding a positive outcome that will result in better "management" of the bilateral relationship, [reporting that](#) "The meeting comes at the worst point in Russian-American relations since the fall of the Soviet Union about 30 years ago."

To be sure the spin surrounding the meeting has been intense, with the US media running stories about new cyberattacks on America's infrastructure, attributing them to Russia with

scant evidence, while Putin responded by declaring publicly that [he does not expect](#) any breakthroughs, observing that the fractured bilateral relationship has unfortunately become “hostage to internal political processes in the United States itself.” Putin has said repeatedly that he wants his country to be treated with respect by a US that perversely perceives itself as “an exceptional nation, with special, exclusive rights to practically the entire world...I cannot go along with that.”

Biden for his part is also piling on the rhetoric, pledging that he will “stand up to Putin...from a position of strength.” Upon arrival in Britain at the start of his European trip, where he is desperately seeking to be relevant, [he pledged](#) to strengthen ties with America’s allies, an interesting objective as it has been recently revealed that the US has been aggressively spying on its closest friends in Europe. He also warned Russia that it will suffer “robust and meaningful” consequences if it engages in “harmful activities.” It was not a good starting point for a meeting intended to establish a *modus vivendi* between two adversaries. And there is additional noise coming from the Democrats. Former CIA Senior Russia Analyst Ray McGovern [asks](#) whether Democratic Party “Representative Jason Crow, really believe[s] that ‘Vladimir Putin wakes up every morning and goes to bed every night trying to figure out how to destroy American democracy.’ And what does Speaker Nancy Pelosi mean exactly, as she keeps repeating ‘All roads lead to Putin’? Are we correctly informed that Hillary Clinton suggested President Putin was giving President Trump instructions on January 6th as [the] Capitol building was attacked?”

The most recent hint of what Biden will want to discuss to make points with the media is that it will be heavy on “human rights,” which is, of course, the issue to raise when all else fails. Human rights means Magnitsky-plus and the subject of imprisoned Russian dissident Alexei Navalny, who is likely an agent of both the CIA and a number of other western intelligence agencies, will undoubtedly come up. That suggests that Washington will yet again be seeking to interfere with Russian internal politics, which will in turn mean that the discussion will go nowhere.

The *Times* and [some other analysts](#) speculate in somewhat positive terms that the meeting might actually be mostly about establishing channels of communication that will enable the two countries to deal confidently with each other, closing the door on any possible surprises that might inadvertently lead to war. Putin has said that he is prepared to “work with Biden” while both Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan have indicated that that will be looking for areas of agreement, to start relations moving in the right direction. If so, it will of necessity avoid any detailed discussions of Ukraine and Syria, where the US and Russia have opposing views, though in both those cases it might benefit from some clarification of where the “red lines” are for the two sides. Areas that are likely to be common ground might well include climate change and combatting COVID and it is hoped that those areas of agreement might lead to other lines of communication.

Sergei Lavrov has in fact to a certain extent set the tone for the gathering, complimenting the US foreign policy team of Secretary of State Toni Blinken and Jake Sullivan for communicating “frankly” and “respectfully” at previous meetings in Reykjavik and Anchorage. Lavrov also made clear that the Biden people, though sure to be highly critical of Russia, might be expected to be more predictable than the Trump rotating cast of characters at cabinet level who frequently contradicted themselves.

But all of that said, it is highly unlikely that Biden will try to mitigate the major irritants

between the two countries, even though that is what he has promised to do, because that would mean treating Russia as an equal. Of prime importance are the disagreements that could lead to war, including future status of Ukraine and also Georgia, the bump in the road caused by the current situation in Belarus, and the role of Russia in the Middle East. Biden will also lean heavily on the cybersecurity issue as that is currently popular in the media, but as Putin has already denied any Russian hand in the hacking that discussion is likely to go nowhere. Likewise, any claims that Moscow interfered yet again in US politics during the 2020 election will only poison the discussion.

At the end of the day, the hostility of the Democratic Party towards Russia, which has been festering ever since 2016, will prevail and it is likely that nothing dramatic will come out of the meeting of the two presidents. It is clearly in the United States' national interest to disengage from those areas like Ukraine which Russia sees as vital and which are of no value to the US, but it is unlikely that Biden or any of his closest advisers can see that far. The Democratic Party in power and controlling both houses of Congress as well as the presidency can only be relied upon to deal with any developing crisis involving Russia with a heavy hand.

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