



When Hypocrites Rule Washington and Washington Is Exempt from the World's Rules

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With Eastern Europe heating up as Russia threatens war against Ukraine, the received wisdom in Washington is that concessions are impossible. After all, rewarding Vladimir Putin's conduct would only encourage him to increase his demands next time.

Moreover, the issue is not just Ukraine. A week ago on "Meet the Press" Secretary of State Antony Blinken contended that "there is something even bigger at stake here, and it's the basic rules of the road of the international system – rules that say that one country can't change the borders of another by force, one country can't dictate to another country its choices, its decisions, and its foreign policy, with whom it will associate. One country can't exert a sphere of influence over others."

Blinkin complained: "That's what Russia is purporting to assert. And if we let that go with impunity, then the entire system that provides for stability, prevents war from breaking out is in danger. That's why this is so important. That's why the president's been very clear with President Putin."

After which NBC's Chuck Todd asked Blinken about Washington's lawless attack on Serbia in 1999 and later dismemberment of that country, making Kosovo independent. Todd also pointed to Washington's unprovoked attacks on Iraq and Libya, and support for jihadist and authoritarian combatants against Syria and Yemen. In only the first was there congressional authorization to use force, essentially procured through dishonesty and fraud; in the second the US and Europe deceptively used a UN resolution focused on protecting civilians to back a regime change war.

How could the Biden administration claim to represent "the international system" when the US routinely violated that order's rules, asked Todd? Had not Washington illegally waged war more often than either China or Russia, claiming rights that it denied every other state on earth?

As Blinken spluttered, Todd asked if there was any nation on earth that did so much to dictate to other countries the foreign policy choices that it expected them to make, including banning the slightest association, even a single dollar's worth of commerce, with disfavored regimes? Did not the US misuse its enormous economic power by imposing sanctions on thousands of people, companies, groups, and governments? And what was the Monroe Doctrine but a "sphere of interest?" Did Blinken renounce America's reliance on the Monroe Doctrine and agree that the US should hold no privileged position in Latin America?

Finally, asked Todd, if Washington continued to act with impunity, didn't it risk undermining the entire system? America had lost its credibility as defender of a free international order and there was no one prepared to step up and replace Washington. Could the ongoing instability and possibility of war be consequences of America's misbegotten behavior, Todd pressed?

Only kidding!

Todd expertly played his assigned role as deferential sidekick, establishment mouthpiece, and straight man to the powerful. He treated Blinken's claims as if they were serious and credible, displaying not a hint of skepticism. Todd only wondered why the US had not already inflicted "punishment" on Russia, allowing Blinken to incoherently blather on about the "very strong action" the administration has prepared to take. There was no unpleasant nitpicking about Washington's persistently violent and lawless international behavior.

Of course, Blinken is not the only war-happy policymaker who remained oblivious to his own inconsistencies. A decade ago presidential candidate John McCain expressed outrage at Russia: "in the 21st century nations don't invade other nations." Apparently he forgot about the Iraq war just a few years before, for which he was an enthusiastic cheerleader and afterwards advocated a permanent military presence.

And that was not the only war the saintly McCain, as painted by the media, anyway, wanted to fight. Tim Murphy and Tasneem Raja of *Mother Jones* later noted: "Over the last two decades, McCain has rarely missed an opportunity to call for the escalation of an international conflict. Since the mid-1990s, he's pushed for regime change in more than a half-dozen countries – occasionally with disastrous consequences."

One of McCain's most noted hypocrisies was traveling to Libya in 2009 where he and Lindsey Graham broke bread with Muammar Khadafy, discussing the possibility of Washington providing foreign aid to reward the latter for his opposition to al-Qaeda. Less than two years later they were performing the Maori Haka in and out of Washington demanding war against Khadafy to save humanity. Observed the National Review Institute's Andrew McCarthy: "The senators most strident about the purported need to oust Qaddafi, to crush his armed forces, and to kill him if that's what it takes to empower the rebels, are the very senators who helped fortify Qaddafi's military and tighten the despotic grip of which they now despair."

Such behavior by executive and legislative branch officials leaves the impression that Americans are governed by fools and buffoons. Unfortunately for the world, Washington's wars affect everyone. And the consequences of these many conflicts have been horrendous.

The Watson Institute for International Affairs at Brown University assessed the costs of what might be called the Global War on Terrorism campaigns. A rough summary: thousands of dead Americans, nearly 400,000 dead civilians as a direct result of the conflicts, many more civilians dead as a consequence of the wars, nearly a million dead in all categories, 38 million people displaced, \$8 trillion in financial costs, not including interest expenses for borrowing. Other than that, McCain's policy recommendations were great.

Indeed, consider criticism of Russia for the Donbass conflict and, admittedly of a completely different magnitude, China for last year's border clash with India. The consequences of neither came anywhere close to the horrors of of America's war on Iraq. Although casualty estimates differ greatly, the civilian death toll for Iraq alone likely hit at least 400,000, and perhaps as much as a

million. A million people. Innocent civilians. Killed in *one* of America's wars. For which no president, secretary of state, secretary of defense, or other high official has ever apologized.

Yet Blinken and a host of other US officials are still sanctimoniously ranging the globe, decrying Russian aggression and demanding adherence to international law. Without accounting for even the most grotesque US behavior. Ever.

It is evident that Washington will never hold itself accountable. Neither, it seems, will the US media. Which, unfortunately, appears to leave the job to armed foreigners, including, unfortunately, the Russians and Chinese. That isn't in America's interest, but then, promiscuous war-making by Washington isn't in America's interest either. Ultimately the American people need to ask questions of their officials that no one else will. Otherwise, peace may forever remain out of reach.

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