Twitter Thread by Mig Greengard



Mig Greengard
@chessninja

I'm all for discussing Navaly's personal politics, and disagree with him on much, but saying the free world shouldn't stand up for someone jailed and nearly murdered because he's not Bernie Gandhi Mandela is bullshit. He's risking his life fighting a mafia dictatorship.

Plus, Navaly's politics as we know them (he's never held office), not coincidentally, largely reflect mainstream Russia, which is far from liberal by Western standards. This is probably a more useful topic anyway, tbh, esp re Crimea.

He's ambitious, as was/is Khodorkovsky. He has positions (again, no formal platform) that would make him acceptable to Russians should he ever get an actual chance at power. That makes him less acceptable to Western liberals, but they're always hoping for a Yavlinsky, a Nemtsov.

Navalny and his org fight Putin and corruption. They advocate for free and fair elections, for a democratic Russia that is part of the civilized world. As for his being xenophobic and pro-annexation of Crimea, congratulations, you discovered that he's Russian.

(I've got quite a few far more liberal Russian friends who have a hard time saying Russia should ever give Crimea back. It's a real weak spot, one that Putin was very aware of and exploits effectively with propaganda.)

The morality, or cynical pragmatism, of demanding Navalny's release isn't in question. He isn't a terrorist calling for violent revolution, making you question if he deserves freedom, let alone support. (Btw, that's how Mandela was demonized in SA and abroad.)

As Kasparov said back when he was trying to help create an anti-Putin coalition in 2005 from tiny and scattered liberal and illiberal groups (Bolsheviks!), we'll be on opposite sides of the parliament in a democracy, but at least we'll have a parliament and a democracy.

Finally, Navalny taking power is far-fetched, but that he would and then be WORSE THAN PUTIN is insane. That's not the case with the hard men like Dyumin the oligarchs would prefer to keep order if Putin became unacceptably isolated.

Realistic scenarios for positive political change in Russia require the powers that be deciding they have to make some real (and some token) concessions to democracy and rights because of pressure from inside and out.

Making sure there is no viable alternative to Putin/the regime is what all dictatorships do. They burn the political fields and say they are the only thing defending the people from extremists, communists, nationalists, et al. After 20 years of this, it works.

It's me or the terrorists. It's me or the communists. It's me or the ultra-nationalists. It's an old trick because it's a good one. "What, you'd prefer the Islamic Brotherhood?" It's one reason dictatorships become harder to dislodge. The only opposition become more extreme.

To this end, there is a global Kremlin smear campaign against Navalny, not only inside Russia, just as there was against Khodorkovsky and Kasparov back when they were considered potential political threats. Navalny isn't perfect, but don't carry water for Putin, either.

Late add, a more likely and far worse power shift in Russia would be populist and ultra-nationalist, propped up by the oligarchs. This DOES NOT mean propping up Putin or caving in to the Evil We Know (tm) argument. Russians deserve a shot at freedom, as does everyone. Fin.