

ATHENA

FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH

MSc Course

"The EU and the Post-Soviet Space"

Dana

RENTENAAR

AS

ALEXEI NAVALNY

Russian opposition
leader



Co-funded by
the European Union

ATHENA

- Jean Monnet Chair -



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the ATHENA Jean Monnet Chair, the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

This “foreign policy speech” was originally written for the ATHENA Jean Monnet Chair MSc Course “The EU and the Post-Soviet Space” taught by Dr. Olga Burlyuk. It is published as part of our mission to showcase peer-leading papers written by students during their studies. This work can be used for background reading and research, but should not be cited as an expert source or used in place of scholarly articles/books.

Context

Alexei Navalny is a prominent opposition leader in Russia, focusing mainly on exposing corruption in the Russian system. He used to be a lawyer and started his quest to expose corruption in the system by buying small shares in state-owned companies, gaining access to their official documents (which showed corruption was at play), and made them public. Since then, he has organized many rallies with massive turnout throughout the entire country as well as run for mayor of Moscow. His most recent exposure of corruption was in the form of a video, showing drone footage of the several lavish estates and palaces owned by oligarchs and political elites. His political activities and journalism have landed him in prison dozens of times over the years and in 2020, he was poisoned. Upon his return to Moscow after having recovered from the assassination attempt in Berlin, he claims to have tricked one of Putin's agents into giving him the details of how his assassination attempt was carried out, which I reference at the start of the speech. After watching several of Navalny's speeches, I noticed he often refers to Putin as 'Mr. Putin', in a degrading tone. He is not afraid to blatantly call him a thief and a coward. Navalny doesn't seem to think his work is brave and often says he isn't scared, because he is 'ready to die for this cause'. I have tried to incorporate all of these things into this speech. Additionally, I wore a set of prison overalls and had my hands tied together for dramatic effect. Now, imagine you are a member of the European Parliament, working on your computer when you receive this video message from Navalny:

Speech

Navalny whispers: Are we live? Ok.

Dear Europe, dear EU leaders, Members of Parliament,

I can imagine you might be a little surprised to hear from me. The last time I was able to make my voice heard, I was in a glass cage in the courtroom being sentenced to 9 years in prison on trumped up embezzlement charges. This time, you're hearing me speak through your screens, as I've managed to trick yet another one of Mr. Putin's minions into giving me what I want. This time, it's not information that I've managed to acquire, but a phone. Once the guard passes by my cell, I will pay the price for this little trick. So in the short time I have, I am sending you this message.

I know the relationship between the EU and Russia is a difficult one at the moment. But please, do not let the people of Russia suffer for the actions of one man. In my eyes, there are two parts to Russia. There are the Russian people, who deserve a good life and to be treated warmly. And there is the Russian state, a bunch of crooks and criminals who have temporarily taken power over my country. Putin is a thief, sitting at the head of an entirely corrupt system. He has stolen my country, and stolen the chance at a good future for the Russian people. My people.

I have heard some call what I have done brave. But I only see it as necessary. You see, I am not afraid, but Mr. Putin clearly is. There is a reason he doesn't dare to say my name out loud, only referring to me as 'that gentleman' or, his more recent favorite, 'that convict'. And while being imprisoned has become a routine in my life, he is a fool to think he can control me like this. Because it is not me he is afraid of, but rather the thousands of Russians who stand by me, who

protest for change, who fight for democracy! He pretends to be deaf to their voices, blind to their turnout on the streets, and stupid to their demands for change.

Europe, the Russian people need to know that the EU will not keep silent. I have seen your attempts at sanctions on some of our political officials, but they have all been misplaced. I have shown you the corruption in my country, and how deep it runs. You've seen the videos. It's all about the money, and that money is in the hands of a few fat oligarchs, who live their lavish lives on your European coast lines. Target your sanctions at them. Take their yachts out of the sunny bays of Monaco and send them back to their cold motherland. Hit them where it hurts. And hit them hard.

Sh*t... I hear the guard coming down the hall. So please, Europe, do not let my message fall on deaf ears. Act now!