Neil Abrams @neil_abrams

Oct 5 · 18 tweets · neil_abrams/status/1577658014336782336

I hesitate to call it a "mask-off moment" since, to have a mask-off moment, you need to actually wear one in the first place. But the tweet below is revealing of a fundamental truth about the man: @MaxBlumehthal—I shit you not—is an imperialist shill. A thread.

Max Blumenthal ✔
@MaxBlumenthal

After the Soviet collapse, the US expected Russia to abandon the people of Novorossiya the same way Egypt betrayed the dispossessed Palestinian nation with its agreement to Camp David.

The US expected Russia to accept humiliation for peace and was dealt a decisive rebuke today.

10:45 PM · Sep 30, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

1,011 Retweets   **155** Quote Tweets   **4,329** Likes

It's despicable, albeit predictable, for @MaxBlumenthal to pretend that last Friday's staged annexation "referendums" in Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk & Luhansk were somehow free and fair. But the "Novorossiya" line takes Blumenthal's nihilistic depravity to another level.

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Let's start with the preposterous notion that 87% or more of these regions would ever vote to join Russia. Do you know what % of their respective populations is actually made up of ethnic Russians?

Here's the breakdown from the latest available census:

Luhansk: 39%
Donetsk: 38%
Zaporizhzhia: 25%
Kherson: 14%

Number of Russians by region (Oblast) per the last systematic census in 2001

Oblast	Number in 2001[84]	Percent in 2001
Donetsk Oblast	1,844,400	38.2
Dnipropetrovsk Oblast	627,500	17.6
Kyiv	337,300	13.1
Kharkiv Oblast	742,000	25.6
Lviv Oblast	92,600	3.6
Odesa Oblast	508,500	20.7
Luhansk Oblast	991,800	39.0
Autonomous Republic of Crimea	1,180,400	58.3
Zaporizhia Oblast	476,800	24.7
Kyiv Oblast	109,300	6.0
Vinnytsia Oblast	67,500	3.8
Poltava Oblast	117,100	7.2
Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast	24,900	1.8
Khmelnytskyi Oblast	50,700	3.6
Cherkasy Oblast	75,600	5.4
Zhytomyr Oblast	68,900	5.0
Zakarpattia Oblast	31,000	2.5
Mykolaiv Oblast	177,500	14.1
Rivne Oblast	30,100	2.6
Sumy Oblast	121,700	9.4
Chernihiv Oblast	62,200	5.0
Kherson Oblast	165,200	14.1

Not that ethnic Russians in Ukraine have ever been all that enthusiastic about getting annexed by Russia. Below are opinion polls from 2014 and 2022. Note how much lower the % of people expressing support for union is than the actual % of ethnic Russians living in each region.

Do you support the idea, that your region should secede from Ukraine and join Russia?

	South-East as a whole	Dnipropetrovsk region	Donetsk region	Zaporizhia region	Luhansk region	Mykolayiv region	Odessa region	Kharkiv region	Kherson region
Certainly, yes, I do	7,1	3,7	11,9	2,2	13,2	3,5	3,2	9,2	1,0
Rather, yes	8,3	3,2	15,6	4,0	17,1	3,7	4,0	6,9	2,5
Difficult to say for sure, partly yes, partly no	12,5	6,9	17,3	9,9	12,4	6,0	11,9	17,3	11,4
Rather, no	16,0	13,1	17,3	17,5	20,6	6,7	19,3	16,1	11,1
Certainly, no, I don't	53,7	71,0	34,0	64,0	31,3	78,7	59,5	49,5	73,5
REFUSE TO ANSWER	2,4	2,0	3,0	2,5	5,5	1,5	2,2	1,0	0,5

Table4. What would you like to see Ukraine's relations with Russia?

Distribution by regions, February 2022, %

	Ukraine as a whole, %	Western	Central	Southern	Eastern
Ukraine's relations with Russia should be the same as with others, with visas and customs	44	55	49	35	23
Ukraine and Russia must be independent, but without visas and customs	48	40	45	54	62
Ukraine and Russia must unite into one state	5	1	3	8	11
DIFFICULT TO SAY	3	4	3	3	3
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

17.2.2022

(The 2022 poll shows results not by individual oblast but by W, C, S, and E Ukraine. Zaporizhzhia & Kherson are 2 of 5 oblasts in southern Ukr while Donetsk & Luhansk are 2 of 3 in eastern Ukr.)

2014 poll: https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=302&page=1

2022 poll: https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1102&page=1

Want to know how "referenda" actually work under Russian occupation? Phone intercepts between Donetsk warlords and their Kremlin masters from 2014 show the latter picking a random number out of thin air to use as the "result" of a referendum that hadn't happened yet.

> ## "Write something like 99 percent down … well, not 99 percent … Let's say 89 percent voted for the Donetsk Republic."
>
> In early May, Ukrainian security officials released a recording of an alleged phone call between a prominent rebel figure in eastern Ukraine and Alexander Barkashov, the leader of an ultranationalist paramilitary outfit in Russia with a clear fascist streak. In the call, Barkashov is purportedly advising his interlocutor in eastern Ukraine on how to proceed with an impending referendum, which led to the declaration by separatists of the "People's Republic of Donetsk." Just days later, a separatist election official in Donetsk told the news agency Reuters that nearly 90 percent had voted for independence. "Eighty-nine percent, that's it," he said.

Source for above: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/09/03/the-crisis-in-ukraine-as-told-by-leaked-phone-calls/

So, no, @MaxBlumenthal, these "referenda" that were just held in the four Ukrainian regions Russia is pretending to annex were themselves pretend-farces that could never be real given the entirely understandable hostility of local residents to the prospect of joining Russia.

But @MaxBlumenthal's blind acceptance of the "referendum" results isn't even the most revealing part of his tweet; it's his use of the term "Novorossiya" to refer to the regions of southern and eastern Ukraine Russia is annexing. Here's why:

"Novorossiya" isn't an actual thing—at least not since the days of the Tsarist empire, when it referred to an administrative unit carved out of modern-day Ukraine and Russia that had been annexed in the mid-18th century by Catherine the Great.

When the Tsarist empire ceased to exist, so did Novorossiya. But after the Soviet collapse, far-right Russian nationalists salty over losing their precious empire revived the term and used it to refer to swathes of now-independent Ukraine that they felt should be part of Russia.

In 2014, when Putin occupied Crimea and launched his stealth invasion of eastern Ukraine, dispatching Russian Nazi fighters (yes, really) and eventually Russian troops to take over parts of the country, he revived the term "Novorossiya" to legitimize his new imperial project.

> "I would like to remind you that what was called Novorossiya back in the tsarist days – Kharkov, Lugansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Nikolayev and Odessa – were not part of Ukraine back then," Putin said. "The center of that territory was Novorossiysk, so the region is called Novorossiya. Russia lost these territories for various reasons, but the people remained."
>
> Putin's comment might be taken as it was portrayed – as an aside, or a little tidbit of information – if it weren't for the fact that Novorossiya has been brought up so often in recent days by pro-Russian activists, who have reportedly been chanting the word as they argued against staying with Kiev. Someone has even set up a Web site that appears devoted to bringing the historical region back.

(Source for above:)
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/04/18/understanding-novorossiya-the-latest-historical-concept-to-get-worried-about-in-ukraine/

The whole project was abandoned pretty quickly after the Kremlin realized there was no appetite whatsoever for separation from Ukraine outside of the Donbas (and was a minority allegiance even there—see above). Naturally, however, he's brought it back it for the 2022 invasion.

I cannot emphasize enough just how fake this concept of "Novorossiya." Aside from weird, esoteric Russian nationalists, nobody in eastern Ukraine had even heard of, much less identified with, the idea until the Kremlin started promoting it in 2014.
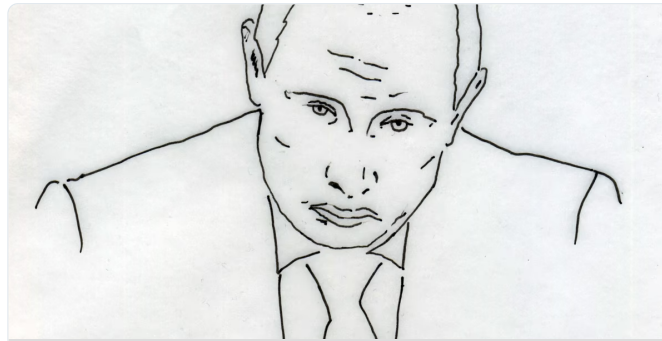

How Vladimir Putin Is Revolutionizing Information Warfare
How Vladimir Putin is revolutionizing information warfare
https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-putin-revolutionizing-i…

It was something of an underestimation. The new Russia doesn't just deal in the petty disinformation, forgeries, lies, leaks, and cyber-sabotage usually associated with information warfare. It reinvents reality, creating mass hallucinations that then translate into political action. Take Novorossiya, the name Vladimir Putin has given to the huge wedge of southeastern Ukraine he might, or might not, consider annexing. The term is plucked from tsarist history, when it represented a different geographical space. Nobody who lives in that part of the world today ever thought of themselves as living in Novorossiya and bearing allegiance to it—at least until several months ago. Now, Novorossiya is being imagined into being: Russian media are showing maps of its 'geography,' while Kremlin-backed politicians are writing its 'history' into school textbooks. There's a flag and even a news agency (in English and Russian). There are several Twitter feeds. It's like something out of a Borges story—except for the very real casualties of the war conducted in its name.

And yet here is @MaxBlumenthal, a guy who revels in smearing others as imperialists, peddling the Kremlin's bullshit about "Novorossiya" as a means of sugarcoating Putin's nakedly imperialistic project to crush and dismember a neighboring country.
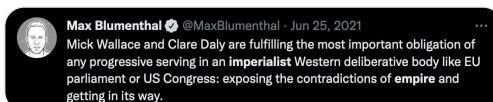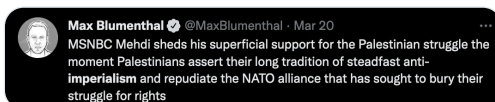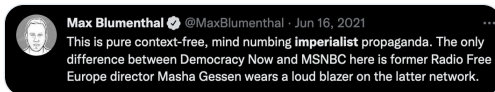
So next time you see @MaxBlumenthal call someone *else* an apologist for empire, just remember that apologizing for empire is his very reason for existing. This is not a guy with actual principles. He's just a nihilist hawking imperialist propaganda for money and clout. /end

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