



Pekka Kallioniemi @P_Kallioniemi

Mar 17 · 18 tweets · [P_Kallioniemi/status/1636726620600905732](https://twitter.com/P_Kallioniemi/status/1636726620600905732)

In today's [#vatniksoup](#) I'll introduce an American academic, political scientist and Quincy Institute author, Max Abrahms ([@MaxAbrahms](#)). He's best-known for his pro-Russian and pro-Syrian views, and especially for trying to fit them into an academic framework.

1/15



On 7 Mar, 2023, @TheAtlantic published an op-ed titled "I Teach International Relations. I Think We're Making a Mistake in Ukraine" written by Abrahms. You rarely see op-ed titles with this much of self-satisfaction, but we'll let that slide - let's take a look at the content. 2/15



His article clearly is an attempt to create a "scholarly perspective" on the war in Ukraine. He's suggesting that if the West wants to help Ukraine, it should actually STOP the military & weapons aid, and that the US is provoking Russian aggression by sending weapons to 🇺🇦.

3/15

First of all, Abrahms builds his arguments around Mearsheimer's view on NATO expansion to being the main culprit of the Russo-Ukrainian War. This silly accusation has been debunked several times, and you can read mine here:



4/15

Whether Russian leaders wish to reclaim some former Soviet territory for national power is orthogonal to Vladimir Putin and his predecessors repeatedly characterizing NATO expansion as a threatening provocation. Even prominent American military strategists—such as the Cold War architect George Kennan—have been deeply critical of NATO expansion since the 1990s because of how it's seen in Moscow.

Professor Branislav Slantchev, a professor of Political Science at the University of California San Diego, has written an excellent academic analysis on the article & if you decided to read Max's article on The Atlantic, you should follow with this:



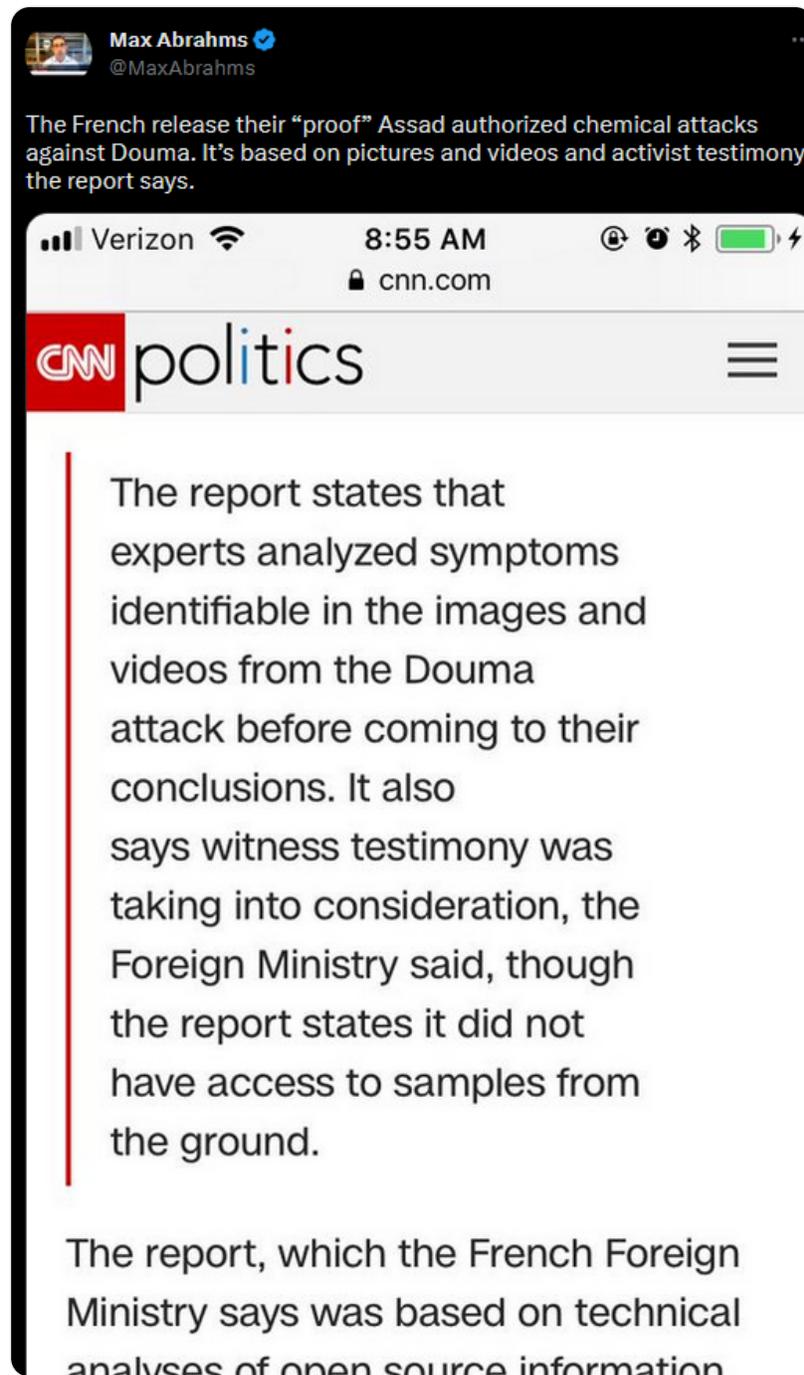
How to fake a scholarly argument — Abrahms in The Atlantic

March 8, 2023 This article caught my eye because its author, Max Abrahms, charges that there is "frequent disconnect between international-relations scholarship and common espoused views in W..."

<https://slantchev.wordpress.com/2023/03/08/how-to-fake-a-scholarly-argument-abrah...>

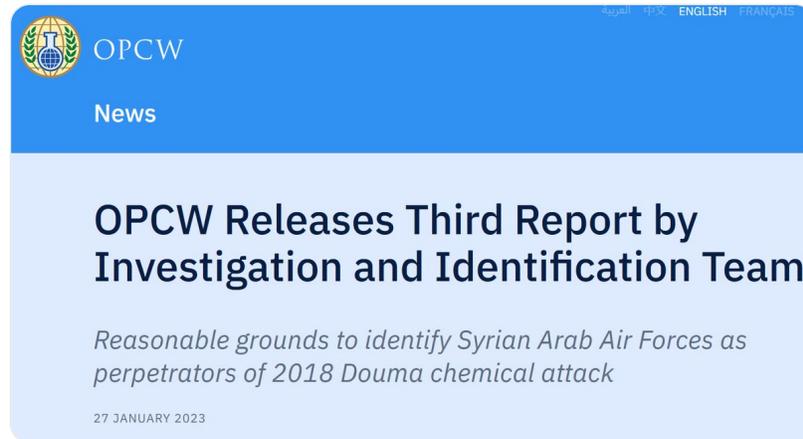
But Abrahms has done much more than this op-ed he's now pushing on every media channel - Previously he has aligned with Max Blumenthal's fake news blog The Grayzone by denying the al-Assad regime's involvement in Douma chemical attack.

6/15



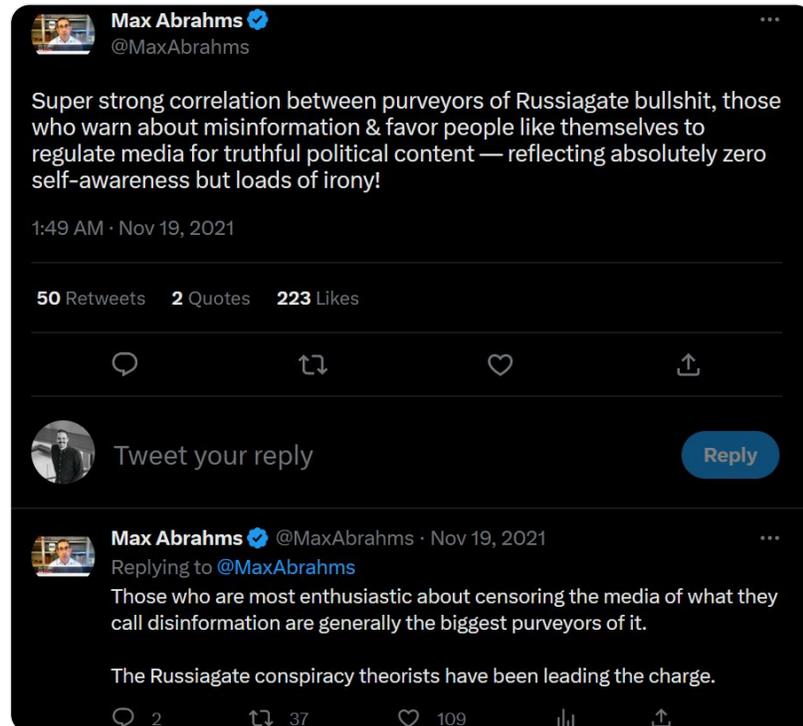
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) recently published their third report on Douma and concluded that "there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Forces were the perpetrators of the chemical weapons attack".

7/15



Abrahms has occasionally commented on the Russiagate, calling it a "ruse". I started writing an op-ed this morning titled: "I teach information operations & disinformation. I think Max Abrahms shouldn't talk about Russiagate".

8/15



Abrahms' academic career so far has been quite impressive, but he's also had his fair share of hardships. He had to resign from the board of the journal of Terrorism and Political Violence following an investigation on serial plagiarism, after Dr. Or Honig and ...

9/15

🏠 Terrorism and Political Violence

Publish with us Submit an article ▾ About this journal ▾ Explore Browse all articles & issues ▾ 

Ready to submit?

Start a new manuscript submission or continue a submission in progress

[Go to submission site ↗](#)

Submission information

- [Instructions for authors](#)
- [Editorial policies](#)

Editorial board

Editor-in-Chief
John Horgan
Georgia State University, GA, USA

Founding Editor
David C. Rapoport
University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Editors
Max Taylor
University College, London, UK

...Jake Shapiro accused him of using their work without referencing it. Shapiro even wrote to the publisher of Abrahms' book "Rules for Rebels", pointing out various instances where Max stole Shapiro's texts without referencing them.

10/15

Introduction

This report describes the similarities between Abrahms' *Rules for Rebels* and previously published work. The overall assessment is based on Northeastern University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) which states the following:

"The University defines plagiarism as using as one's own the words, ideas, data, code, or other original academic material of another without providing proper citation or attribution. Plagiarism can apply to any assignment, either final or drafted copies, and it can occur either accidentally or deliberately. Claiming that one has "forgotten" to document ideas or material taken from another source does not exempt one from plagiarizing."

Summary of the Work

Rules for Rebels investigates management practices of a wide range of militant groups such as the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and Hezbollah, just to name a few. He examines public declarations of past leaders (such as MLK Jr., Che Guevara, and Nelson Mandela), the history of various groups, and prior research to identify three "rules" which militant leaders must follow to ensure a successful campaign: (1) learning to win; (2) restraining to win; and (3) branding to win. Re-phrased slightly, the core hypothesis of the book is that accomplishing a militant organization's political goals requires both minimize killing of innocent civilians and protecting the group's reputation by denying organizational involvement, or at least intent, whenever usually operatives harm civilians. In order to do so, Abrahms argues that successful rulets must centralize the organization in such a way that (a) restrains lower-level members from committing unwarranted terrorism against innocent civilians, (b) educates members to avoid civilian casualties, and (c) provides the leader with information to vet out prospective members whom may be prone to attacking civilians.

The structure of *Rules* sequentially follows the three rules for rebels mentioned above and systematically provides examples by exploring certain techniques militant groups carry out. Abrahms' also reports broad statistical evidence that terrorist groups who attack civilians during their campaign are more likely to fail to achieve their goals in comparison to groups whose terrorist operations are military personnel focused.

Similarities and Differences from Previous Works

Abrahms work makes a set of arguments in Parts 2 and 3 which are extremely similar to ones made by other scholars. Most notably, Abrahms phrases much of Parts 2 and 3 in terms of principal-agent problems. He presents doing so as an innovation. He does not appropriately cite prior work applying agency theory to understanding the organization of terrorist groups with the exception of his 2015 co-authored piece. Articles, books, and chapters which apply agency theory to understanding terrorist groups and highlight many of the dynamics that Abrahms discusses including the following:

- Sun-Ki Chai. "An Organizational Economics Theory of Antigovernment Violence." *Comparative Politics* 26 (1993): 99-110. As noted in footnote 109 of chapter 2 of *The Terrorist's Dilemma*, this "...was the first work to apply agency theory to terrorism."

Similarities and Differences from Previous Works

Abrahms work makes a set of arguments in Parts 2 and 3 which are extremely similar to ones made by other scholars. Most notably, Abrahms phrases much of Parts 2 and 3 in terms of principal-agent problems. He presents doing so as an innovation. He does not appropriately cite prior work applying agency theory to understanding the organization of terrorist groups with the exception of his 2015 co-authored piece. Articles, books, and chapters which apply agency theory to understanding terrorist groups and highlight many of the dynamics that Abrahms discusses including the following:

- Sun-Ki Chai. "An Organizational Economics Theory of Antigovernment Violence." *Comparative Politics* 26 (1993): 99-110. As noted in footnote 109 of chapter 2 of *The Terrorist's Dilemma*, this "...was the first work to apply agency theory to terrorism."
- Joseph H. Felter, Jarret Braclman, Jeff Brantlett, Brian Fishman, James Forest, Lianne Kennedy, Bill Perkins, Jacob N. Shapiro, and Tom Stocking. *Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting al-Qa'ida's Organizational Vulnerabilities*. West Point, N.Y.: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006. Footnote 11 on p. 11 identifies Shapiro as the primary author of the section "The Challenges of Organizing Terror: A Theoretical Framework for Analysis."
- Jacob N. Shapiro. "Terrorist Organizations' Vulnerabilities and Inefficiencies: A Rational Choice Perspective." In *Terrorist Financing in Comparative Perspective*. Harold Trinkunas and Jeanne K. Giraldo, eds. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.
- Jacob N. Shapiro and David A. Siegel. "Underfunding in Terrorist Organizations." *International Studies Quarterly* 51 (2007): 405-429.
- "Bureaucratic Terrorists: Al-Qa'ida in Iraq's Management and Finances." In *Bombers, Bank Accounts, and Bleed Out: Al-Qa'ida's Road In and Out of Iraq*. Brian Fishman and Assaf Moghadam, eds. Westpoint, N.Y.: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008.
- Jacob N. Shapiro and David A. Siegel. "Moral Hazard, Discipline, and the Management of Terrorist Organizations." *World Politics* 64 (2012): 39-78.
- Jacob N. Shapiro. *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations*.

Some have even suggested that Abrahms shouldn't have gotten his tenure at the Northeastern University since he is seen as fundamentally unserious researcher by his peers. But then he threatened to sue the Dean for anti-Semitism if he wasn't accepted. Bam, he got his tenure.

11/15

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Wed, May 8, 2019 at 7:36 PM
Subject: Fwd: Max Abrams and academic integrity
To: [REDACTED]

This from Japan sent to the German dean that max threatened with allegations of anti semitism if she did not rule in favor of tenure (and override the Dept vote) she also suppressed all the information about the many plagiarism complaints she had received about Max Abrahms

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Or Honig [REDACTED]
Date: May 8, 2019 at 7:25:01 PM EDT
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Max Abrams and academic integrity
Reply-To: Or Honig [REDACTED]

Dr. Uta Polger
Dean of Social Sciences
Northeastern University

Dear professor Polger,

I would like to inform you of what I believe to be an improper use of material by Max Abrams in his OUP book Rules for Rebels. Essentially, his chapter 13 in the book uses materials that had been already published by my co-author and me in Terrorism and Political Violence. The issue is already being taken care of by Taylor and Francis. I am posting the letter from the editorial board of the journal to me (as well as the details of my complaint) below. What concerns me however is that this is the second time that professor Abrams does that to my materials -- using them without giving due credit. At that time the editor of the Journal of Strategic studies Joe Maiolo forced Abrams to give me credit in a correction issued by the journal. see: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2018.1546360>

I would like therefore to ask you to make him stop this improper behavior before he does it for the third time!

Sincerely,

Or Honig
Associate Professor of International Relations
Institute for International Strategy

On Twitter, Abrahms has routinely suggested that the "US escalation" in 🇺🇦 will eventually lead to nuclear war. The problem with this is that if Ukraine concedes, Putin most probably starts looking for the next target, which could be Moldova, Georgia the Baltic countries.

12/15



As you found out from the title of his op-ed, Max claims to be an expert in international relations, and especially in the areas of terrorism. Considering his expertise, and the fact that he seems to have an opinion on pretty much any topic on Twitter, it is rather ...

13/15

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Max *Abrahms*

Associate Professor of Political Science

Max Abrahms is an expert in international security, especially in the areas of terrorism, counterterrorism, and U.S. foreign policy. He has held fellowships and other research positions with the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, the Empirical Studies of Conflict project at Princeton University, the Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth College, the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point Military Academy, the Department of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University, the Center for Cyber and Homeland Security at George Washington University, the

...surprising that he hasn't made any comments on Bucha massacre, Iziium mass graves, Mariupol theater bombing or Kherson children's torture chambers and other FSB operations.

Similarly to Mark Ames, Katrina vanden Heuvel and Glenn Greenwald, Abrahms seems to be...

14/15



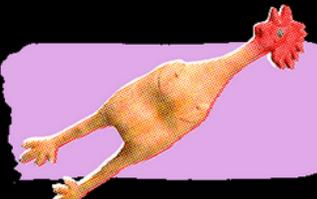
No results for "Max Abrahms bucha"

Try searching for something else, or check your [Search settings](#) to see if they're protecting you from potentially sensitive content.



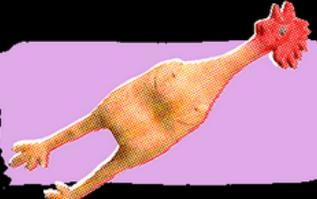
No results for "Max Abrahms izium"

Try searching for something else, or check your [Search settings](#) to see if they're protecting you from potentially sensitive content.



No results for "Max Abrahms kherson"

Try searching for something else, or check your [Search settings](#) to see if they're protecting you from potentially sensitive content.

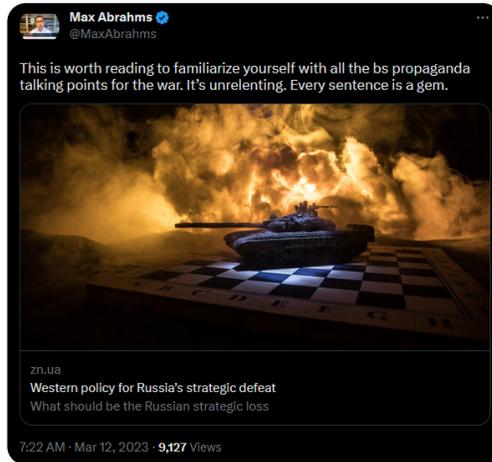


No results for "Max Abrahms mariupol"

Try searching for something else, or check your [Search settings](#) to see if they're protecting you from potentially sensitive content.

....utilizing an anti-US and anti-NATO stance on the conflict - these people blame the West for "aggressive" NATO expansion towards Russia, but the expansion only happens voluntarily and because these countries are afraid of Russia's invasion - for a reason.

15/15



Support my work (and get some AI art!):

Pekka Kallioniemi

buymeacoffee.com/PKallioniemi

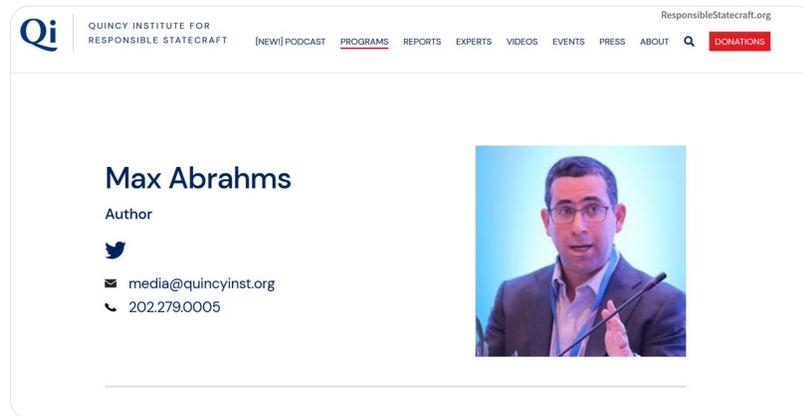
Pekka Kallioniemi

Support me in creating daily vatnik soups! All donations will be spent on research and production of vatnik soup or in the creation of web portal (vatniksoup.com)...

<https://buymeacoffee.com/PKallioniemi>

Past soups: vatniksoup.com

Max, it's very rude to ask me questions and then block me right after. And maybe contact the Quincy Institute's webmaster and tell them to remove you from their website.



CORRECTION TO 1/15;

"Pro-Syrian" should be "pro-Assad".

...