

THREE THINGS: THE C C D OF RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

[NB: check the byline as usual, thanks./~Rayne]

This is an opinion piece, no reporting, simply some thoughts which Russia's invasion of Ukraine have spawned.

It also offers fresh thread space since comments are getting deep below some of the previous threads.

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Colonialism is alive although not necessarily well, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine demonstrates.

When persons of color talk about decolonialism it's frequently in the context of anti-racism – making a concerted effort to unwind domination and occupation of people, place, and culture which have been suppressed and oppressed by white supremacy and white nationalism.

It's the reawakening of culture and consciousness like indigenous language and thinking in those places where they have lived and where their people first arose.

Because racism is so often tightly wound with colonialism, it's easy for white people to believe this is unrelated to them, or worse, reject it as "woke-ism."

The invasion of Ukraine reminds white people colonialism is ongoing and very much affects people who look like them. It underpins the tensions between Britain, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. It's part of the conflict between People's Republic of China and Xinjiang Province, Taiwan, and Hong Kong where different minority ethnic groups have long existed apart from the Han majority in China. It's at the heart of Israel's domination and

apartheid of Palestine; it still affects entire continents including Africa and South America.

After dizzying waves of political and cultural slicing and dicing across several millennia, Ukraine had its own identity as a sovereign state beginning in the mid-1700s but for a handful of years when it was resorbed into the Russian empire. When the USSR collapsed in 1991, Ukraine emerged again as an autonomous sovereign state. It has since then struggled against various forms of incursion by Russia to maintain its sovereignty while working to establish its autonomous cultural identity (ex. Kyiv not Kiev).

In 2013 Ukraine chose to align itself more fully with Europe, exercising its collective human right of self-determination – a rejection of colonization by any other nation-state. Unfortunately its pro-Russian president obstructed this choice setting off the Euromaidan protests and the Maidan revolution, which in turn may have led to Russia's incursion and occupation of eastern Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

What we are watching now is the continued effort by Russia's Putin to destroy Ukraine's sovereignty and restore its previous identity as a subset of Russia – a colonial force seeking to re-colonize a former colony. It is more than re-colonization, though; it's an expressed intent to erase people on an individual and national level. A pogrom.

This is what Putin's "denazification" looks like: the evacuation of one of the world's most historic Jewish communities while the Russian army hunts down Ukraine's Jewish president
<https://t.co/tksdN0qgb1>

– Yair Rosenberg (@Yair_Rosenberg)
February 25, 2022

I don't know that people who are not

familiar with the region and/or are not Jewish realize the extraordinary significance of this. It is earth-shattering for those of us who are—and who have lived through Russian anti-Semitism. This is, essentially, a cross-border pogrom. <https://t.co/NflvzaLuUx>

– Julia Ioffe (@juliaioffe) February 25, 2022

It wouldn't hurt to pay more attention to how people of color view Russia's colonialist efforts for this reason. You might try following Terrell Jermaine Starr (<https://twitter.com/terrelljstarr>) who is currently reporting from Ukraine and Kimberly St. Julian-Varnon (<https://twitter.com/ksvarnon>) who has been studying Ukraine.

It's equally important to reexamine unconscious colonial bias while our heads have been opened to decolonization. Like the words used to explain the Russian invasion compared to other ongoing colonization.

White privilege, white supremacy: the war edition courtesy via @CBSNews #Kyiv #Ukraine

"This isn't a place with all due respect like Iraq or Afghanistan that has seen conflict raging for decades. This is a relatively civilized, relatively European city..."
<pic.twitter.com/ETuyGKuLdx>

– Mona Eltahawy (@monaeltahawy) February 26, 2022

As if the US hadn't installed a colonial occupation in Iraq during the Bush administration. As if Iraq wasn't already a civilized nation before the US invasion in 2003. As if Afghanistan hasn't been occupied by Russia and then the US in our lifetime.

Consent is a core component of democracy, autonomy, and sovereignty.

Watch who across the right-wing in the US supports Putin's invasion. If you look through the lens of respect for affirmative consent, it's no surprise at all which right-wing extremists support Putin.

They don't support consent by anyone who isn't part of their immediate in-group, either.

Which persons reject the autonomy and agency of women and LGBTQ+ people over their own bodies?

Which persons reject the sovereignty of indigenous peoples' lands, or the true history of colonized and occupied people?

Which persons reject the civil rights of non-whites and others marginalized, including the voting rights of non-whites who elected Joe Biden as president?

The same people who also support Putin's invasion have no qualms about rejecting the human rights of Ukrainians. They generally have a problem with democracy here or elsewhere, which relies on the consent of the people.

DARVO isn't merely a behavior exhibited by abusive individuals but colonialists and fascists. Stripped to its barest form it's victim blaming: they made me do it, they were asking for it, so on, while denying responsibility for the abuse.

If you're familiar with abusive relationships particularly with narcissists, you recognize the behavior. We saw it throughout Trump's campaign and administration.

A framework developed by psychologist Jennifer Freyd, DARVO means "deny, attack, and reverse victim and offender," a defensive mechanism used by abusive persons when confronted with their actions.

We saw this with Trump when he accused his rape victim E. Jean Carroll directly and through spokespersons of lying about the attack and attempting to profit off her lawsuit against Trump for defamation, making himself out to be a victim of an opportunist instead of a serial sexual abuser.

Trump scaled up DARVO frequently; one particular attack used repeatedly has been the claim he's been spied on by Democrats and the previous Obama administration. We all know know that these claims were outright fallacious, while intended to redirect attention from spying done for his benefit like the hacking of the DNC servers in 2016, and yet more redirection from whatever he was doing with classified and top secret material during and after his administration.

Nearly all the GOP and its white evangelical base have employed DARVO by claiming victimhood though it exists in a majority white country with a majority white government established to protect white supremacy and nationalism with preference for Christian fundamentalism.

At scale when aimed at a population, DARVO is a confluence of different propaganda techniques melding the Big Lie and tu quoque fallacy using virtue words and smears to gaslight the population into believing the perpetrator over anyone trying to hold them to account.

This is what Putin has done and is doing with Ukraine; he's an abusive leader claiming a false victimhood to defend his attack on a sovereign neighbor.

New: Putin announces "special military operation... aimed at demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine."

pic.twitter.com/XNymE9ECEp

– Oliver Carroll (@olliecarroll)

February 24, 2022

From The Hindu:

Unfazed by tough Western sanctions, President Vladimir Putin said on February 24 that he decided to launch a “special military operation” aimed at the “demilitarisation and denazification” of Ukraine and also bring to justice those who committed numerous crimes against peaceful people, including Russian nationals.

“People’s republics of Donbass approached Russia with a request for help. In connection therewith, I made the decision to hold a special military operation,” Mr. Putin said in a special television address.

He said the goal of the military operation is to “protect the people that are subjected to abuse, genocide from the Kiev regime for eight years, and to this end we will seek to demilitarise and denazify Ukraine and put to justice those that committed numerous bloody crimes against peaceful people, including Russian nationals”. Justice and truth are on Russia’s side, Mr. Putin was quoted as saying by state-run TASS news agency.

We can imagine what Russian state media has been reporting about Ukraine based on this tissue of lies used to create a casus belli.

Julia Ioffe explains what Putin has done but ultimately it’s propaganda.

.@juliaioffe explains how Russia takes ‘a little bit of truth’ and spins it into a ‘cotton candy of lies.’ #LSSC
pic.twitter.com/Q98E1NIe8

– The Late Show (@colbertlateshow)
February 25, 2022

If anyone was to ask Putin if he is using

manufactured excuses for war, he'd deny it.

He'd claim the Ukrainian government is at fault and has started this war.

He'd reverse the victim again as he has already, claiming Russians and Ukraine's Russian nationals.

He'd claim these false victims have been damaged by Ukraine's current government.

Deny, attack, reverse victim and offender.

It's not the first time Putin's done this and gotten away with it. He may have done this about the 1999 Russian apartment bombings in order to boost his political profile and get himself elected; reporting on this may have been the reason behind Alexander Litvinenko's assassination.

What more self-victimization can we expect from Putin as Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues?

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No matter how long this invasion lasts, no matter the costs wreaked by either side, no matter the amount of ginned-up rationalizations for the violence unleashed on Ukraine, Putin has already lost to this man.

"All of us are here protecting our independence of our country."

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy shows his people he remains in the country's capital, Kyiv, as Russian forces approach the city.
pic.twitter.com/i0Zyly7nkE

– Channel 4 News (@Channel4News)
February 25, 2022

I hope he lives to see the last Russian invader leave his country.