

# It's Time for NBC to Refer to Its 'Presidential Historian' as a Liberal Activist

-Becket Adams Apr 14th, 2021



The only thing worse than a partisan demagogue is one who pretends he is neither.

NBC News presidential historian **Michael Beschloss**, a political commentator whom cable and network television try to pass off as an impartial documenter of historical fact, falls squarely into the second category.

He is as rabid a bomb-thrower as anyone who appears on television. The key difference is that Beschloss, who earned his historian stripes writing about 20th century presidents, does it all while hiding behind his title, using his academic bona fides to lend a certain air of legitimacy to his overt and oftentimes ignorant political commentary.

Consider, for example, the recent [New York Times](#) report that asserts former Secretary of State **Mike Pompeo's** frequent criticisms of the Biden administration represent a break with "the custom that current and former secretaries of state avoid the appearance of political partisanship."

For this to be true, one must ignore the partisan activities of former Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton**, who dedicated her life post-2016 to opposing former President **Barack Obama's** successor. One must likewise ignore the existence of former Secretary of State **John Kerry**, who, as a private citizen, was not only a vocal critic of the Trump White House, but also engaged Iran directly in shadow diplomacy without the approval or even the knowledge of the Trump administration.

Unsurprisingly, the *New York Times's* report is underpinned by the input of none of than NBC News presidential historian Michael Beschloss.

“Usually former presidents and secretaries of state try not to quickly trash their successors — especially in foreign policy,” the historian told the *New York Times*.

For a presidential historian, one imagines Beschloss has at least a passing familiarity with the partisan activities of Kerry and Clinton – or former Secretaries of State [Madeleine Albright](#), [Colin Powell](#), or even [Thomas Jefferson](#), for that matter. Sadly, though, this [sort of “expert” analysis is par for the course](#) for Beschloss, who uses his most-favored status in media not to educate, but to patronize left-wing fever dreams.

Recall how Beschloss [lambasted former President Donald Trump](#) last year after the commander in chief returned to the White House following a weekend battling Covid-19 at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Upon his return, the president saluted Marine One from the South Portico stairs.

“In America,” said Beschloss, “our presidents have generally avoided strongman balcony scenes — that’s for other countries with authoritarian systems.”

This assertion about U.S. presidents avoiding “balcony scenes” is not even close to being true. A [brief investigation of the Associated Press’s photo archives](#) disproves Beschloss’s assertion entirely. In fact, as recently as last week, President **Joe Biden** appeared at the Blue Room Balcony, joined by first lady **Jill Biden** and [a staffer in a giant bunny costume](#).

Earlier than this balcony “strongman” silliness, Beschloss also indulged in the [collective freak-out after former first lady Melania Trump](#) restored the Rose Garden to its original 1962 Kennedy administration blueprint.

Beschloss’s role in this particularly stupid episode saw him sharing a misleading photo on social media, implying an immediate before-and-after look at the former first lady’s handiwork.

Before and after photographs of newly renovated White House Rose Garden:  
courtesy [#Getty](#) and [@marycjordan pic.twitter.com/w6bzoNHMjC](#)

— Michael Beschloss (@BeschlossDC) [August 22, 2020](#)

The “before” picture featured in his tweet is from [April 10, 2008](#), during the administration of President **George W. Bush**. Naturally, this detail was lost on the more than 22,000 social media users who cited Beschloss’s tweet as evidence that a once-vibrant garden had been destroyed by the then-first lady, ignoring all the while the side-by-side photos provided by the vaunted historian show the garden in different seasons of bloom.

Before this episode, in March 2018, Beschloss warned MSNBC viewers that Trump was possibly laying down the groundwork to become [dictator for life](#), a theory based partly on [Trump’s congratulatory phone call to Russian President Vladimir Putin](#) as well as the then-president’s frequent jokes about seizing more power.

“[W]e always have to be suspicious” when presidents kid about embracing authoritarianism, Beschloss warned. “Maybe in his mind, it is not such a joke.”

“Donald Trump never criticizes Putin,” he continued, adding Trump is, “so pro-Russian he can barely even see.”

“We always have to ask why is this happening, some people say maybe Putin has something, the Russians have something on Trump,” the historian said. “I think it may be something else. ... He joked about being president for life, Donald Trump did, said it was a joke. I think we always have to be suspicious that maybe in his mind, it is not such a joke.”

This isn't the calm, thoughtful, and careful analysis one would expect of a seasoned academic. This is pure speculation, much of it baseless, and all of it pretty ridiculous in retrospect thanks to the [eventual implosion of the Russian collusion narrative](#).

This is what's so frustrating about Beschloss: He's a partisan despite having the resume to speak authoritatively on U.S. history.

Along with his gig at NBC, Beschloss [has served as a trustee](#) of the White House Historical Association and the National Archives Foundation. He is a [former trustee](#) of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. His [credits include appointments in history](#) at the Smithsonian Institution and Oxford University. Beschloss has also authored nine books on the presidency.

Yet, despite having an academic background that suggests he's intelligent enough to provide news audiences with analysis that is as well-informed as it is restrained, his input is generally no different from that of your run-of-the-mill partisan attack dog.

In fact, despite his impressive background, Beschloss is a constant source of partisan buffoonery and petty sniping, leveraging his credentials as an academic to pollute cable and network airwaves with political and sometimes ahistorical commentary.

In February 2020, for example, NBC's presidential historian attempted [to link Republican Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri to the late Sen. Joseph McCarthy](#) based entirely on the fact they both point “menacingly” with their index fingers.

What U.S. Senator in history pointed menacingly at witnesses like this?  
[pic.twitter.com/CllnJ9rHoT](https://pic.twitter.com/CllnJ9rHoT)

— Michael Beschloss (@BeschlossDC) [February 22, 2021](#)

It's true: no one in the U.S. Senate has ever pointed with his or her finger before, [except for all those senators who have](#). An astute observation!

Elsewhere, Beschloss, who again, plays the role of the serious academic, scored sweet, sweet re-tweets and likes in September 2020 after he spent a couple of days on social media [“trolling” the president of the United States following the publication of](#) an anonymously

sourced [and widely disputed](#) report alleging Trump had called dead U.S. Marines “losers” and “suckers.” Even if it were true, what is an “eminent” historian doing trolling the president on Twitter?

At this point, it would be easier, and more honest, for NBC to identify Beschloss simply as a “political analyst” than pretend he is both ideologically and emotionally detached from the news of the day.

It would be better than labeling him an apolitical arbiter of historical truth. And kinder than calling him what he most resembles: A partisan zealot.

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