

How COVID and Syria Conspiracies Introduce Fascism to the Left. Part I: The Red-Brown Media Spectrum

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Why is a supposedly US veteran's organization, co-founded by someone active with the National Socialist Movement, spreading conspiracies about COVID-19 and Syria? Why is that same organization in collaboration with multiple foreign intelligence agencies while trying to frame it so as to appeal to western anti-imperialists? Welcome to the weird and, at times, shocking world of "red-brown" (fascist movements with left-right crossover) media ecosystems!

It's no secret that white supremacists and fascists more broadly flock towards [conspiracy theories](#). It is also well known that many white supremacists flock to [supporting Assad](#) and pro-Russian [conspiracies](#). What is less studied and far more strange is how fascism is able to mutate to adopt left-wing aesthetics to engage in entryism. While alternative media forms the critical backbone of any robust society, it is also an area ripe for political manipulation from a range of state and non-state actors. The simultaneity of various alternative media organizations collaborating with fascists while posting COVID-19 and Syria conspiracies shines a light on this semi-coordinated disinformation and hate network. Even amongst good-faith leftist organizations, the overlap with these networks can spread pro-fascist talking points in a way that muddles the discourse and protects various right-wing geopolitical interests.

This is Part 1 in a 3-Part series that explores the political range and complexities of actors in this space by analyzing connections in people, venues, and ideas especially with regard to conspiracies surrounding Syria and COVID-19. Part 1 sets the context and explores the right-leaning section of this network. Part 2 looks at the most representative and bizarre actors in the pure red-brown space. Part 3 looks into the extent and mechanisms through which some of these actors and ideas then get funneled into left leaning media ecosystems. Through the series I hope to better expose paths towards a more robust and anti-fascist internationalist left built for the complexities of the modern era and its information warfare.

What is 'Red-Brown'?

'Red-brown' is the modern parlance for a syncretism, or weird intersections and crossovers, between fascist [\[1\]](#) and leftist political ideology. Though it is sometimes thought of as an evocation of "horseshoe theory", this framing has been [critiqued](#) with others offering [alternatives](#). Though red-brown's most blatant examples lie in left-nazis like the National Bolshevik (NazBol) party and Strasserism more generally, it's spread is actually much wider. This wider spread can also be seen in the somewhat more robust German concept of 'querfront' or third-positionism. Generally speaking, its proponents believe the only path towards beating the evils of liberalism is a populist union between the far-right and the hard-left. Red-brown has become a common term for what generally amounts to fascist politics with leftist aesthetics, but can also bridge into complex topics like [eco-](#)

[fascism](#). While fascism with environmentalist politics is perhaps an obvious example, a more telling example is the co-optation of fringe parts of leftist movements such as anti-imperialism to specific fascist geopolitical projects. While some explicit white supremacist terrorists such as the Christchurch attacker identify as anti-imperialists, red-brown politics exist in a spectrum wherein murkier examples can be harder to categorize. As such, though not all examples are the same, in looking at the spectrum of red-brown, many researchers have taken to using the term more generally. There have been some more in-depth scholarly research pieces about the phenomenon, and some higher profile exposes of media, individuals, organizations, conferences, funding, movements in these landscapes, but most of the work has been forced to the margins in the form of blog posts by journalists who have intentionally or accidentally stumbled into conflict with this strange political ecosystem. [2]

Syria and COVID Conspiracies

Regardless of what degree of war crimes you believe [Assad](#) or [Russia](#) to have committed in Syria it is without a doubt that they, like the [US](#) and fundamentalist groups, have committed heinous violence against civilians. From there, the degrees of war crimes you believe in tends to fall more so along political camp lines, and thus your media sources, than with the actual evidence. Citing the lies leading to the Iraq war, many in the hard left, red-brown, and ‘[vulgar](#)’ anti-imperialist left practice complete denial of any wrongdoing of Assad or Russia. Some leftist commentators, like [Joey Ayoub](#) from Lebanon, call this manner of “anti-imperialism”, [alt-imperialism](#) because “They just support different forms of imperialisms while always centering themselves. It’s that simple.” Most in these milieu refuse to acknowledge even the possibility of torture [prisons](#) or [chemical weapons](#) usage by Assad/Russia. For these reasons, much of the controversies and conspiracies center around critical geopolitical information war territory such as the reputation of the [White Helmets](#) or the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](#) (OPCW). Chemical weapons denialism about atrocities like the 2013 [Ghouta](#) sarin gas attack that killed over 1,400 men, women, and children contributes to the spread of conspiratorial and revisionist [interpretations](#) of other massacres.

There is a similar consistency of either COVID-19 [skepticism](#) or outright denial in these networks often oscillating around topics like lockdown efforts, bio-weapons, Bill Gates, and secret (and vaguely or explicitly anti-Semiticly coded) cabals devoted to depopulation. Contrary to the broader right-wing that shifted towards [Sinophobia](#), these clusters often took up pro-Chinese and anti-US positions arguing things like that the US actually created the coronavirus to implement a New World Order instead of just critiquing the US’ actual disastrous handling of the virus. However, the broader appeal of things like anti-masking protests and pre-emptively halting containment efforts have seeped out into strange intersections of left and right wing audiences through red-brown framings and outlets.

The Red-Brown Media Spectrum

The following media-analyses represent an extremely small snapshot of a sprawling and maddeningly complex alternative media milieu, with conferences, journals, ideologues, and endless blogs syndicating the same or slightly altered content ([splintering](#)) in order to prop up a conspiratorial [alternative narrative](#). In order to give a clearer view of the spectrum of red-brown and how people can be radicalized towards fascism through it, I will move from it’s far-right to far-left edges focusing on connections between authors and ideas especially with regard to COVID-19 and Syria conspiracies. For part 1 here, I will explore first two websites that are far-right aligned and interconnected, but show some leftist flourishes.

Daily Stormer

Daily Stormer is a run-of-the-mill neo-Nazi or extreme alt-right website where most articles are either syndicated or splintered from outlets like [ZeroHedge](#) or *RT* or just written by the founder himself. The website is obviously far-right but it also deals in more supposedly left-leaning topics such as [corporate tax avoidance](#), [poverty](#), [“anti-zionism”](#), [environmentalism](#). It even discusses the merits of conservative ‘leftists’ like [Derrick Jensen](#) as it deems them useful to spreading fascism. In this case they align with Jensen of his apparent hatred of queer people. They [syndicate](#) conspiracies from syncretic alternative media conspiracy sites like [Zerohedge](#).

Daily Stormer seems to believe that COVID-19 is simultaneously a [hoax](#), a US created [bio-weapon](#) only affecting [Chinese people](#), and a plot led by [Bill Gates](#) to take over the world with vaccinations. Like much of the Marxist-Lenists and centralized-Socialism Leftists, they also adopt a line of being strictly critical of the [OPCW](#) and [name](#) the alt-imperialist Roger Waters as an ally for his criticism of the White Helmets saying he’s “always down to kick a k*ke.” . They even go as far as [supporting](#) democratic candidate Tulsi Gabbard as an ally for her willingness to work with “Syria’s Neo-Nazis”, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, in redeeming the image of Assad. They buttress their support of her saying, “Last year the SSNP hosted a delegation of MEPs from Golden Dawn, Forza Nuova, and NPD intended to educate and hopefully begin to stop the Judeo-Western meddling in Syria. The organization has expressed solidarity and eagerness to work with nationalists in the West against the machinations of our common Jewish enemy.” Of course, Tulsi Gabbard or Roger Waters cannot be held responsible for *Daily Stormer*’s endorsements, but nonetheless the endorsements show how murky these political alliances can get.

Russia Insider

Russia Insider is a very strange website in that it hosts a whole menu category entitled [“Holohoax”](#) that mostly contains syndications of the *Daily Stormer*. It was founded by Charles Bausman who wrote an antisemitic screed entitled [“It’s time to drop the Jew Taboo”](#) and yet somehow enjoys the favor of being followed on Twitter by a strange mish-mash of Russian government and alt-imperialist accounts. Bausman was also a [speaker](#) alongside Max Blumenthal of alt-imperialist outlet *The Grayzone* on an *RT* panel. Leaked emails suggest that at one point Bausman attempted to [secure](#) funding from a far-right Russian politician affiliated with the syncretic and intelligence agency [connected](#) outlet Katehon.

They [claim](#), unsurprisingly, that Russia’s top doctor Alexander Myasnikov has confirmed that COVID is “Just the Flu, It’s All BS.” They claim a [personal friendship](#) with Maram Susli, also known as Partisangirl. She is a [contributor](#) who supports the SSNP ([“Syria’s Neo-Nazis”](#)), [ethnic cleansing](#), and [Assad](#). She denies [war-crimes](#) and was both a [Richard Spencer](#) and [David Duke](#) interviewee. *Russia Insider* publishes her [talks](#) on conspiracies about Israeli and US takeover of Syria with glowing praise. To argue against the OPCW findings they republish Caitlin Johnstone of *RT* and *Consortium News*, who says the chemical weapons were both a [false flag](#) conspiracy theory by al-Qaeda. She also claims that the open-source investigators of the attacks are actually just [war peddlers](#) in a piece where she also continues the fantasy that the US is intentionally arming ISIS and al-Qaeda. Ironically, among the many other [articles](#) they syndicate from her is one where she claims that when people call your behavior “anti-Semitic” you must “Never apologize. Make no concessions. Go on the offensive.” This is similar to her standard red-brown [claim](#) that you should side with anyone against the US and “you’ll always be right.” Of course, Caitlin has been a [stalwart](#) for red-brown alliances between the left and the far-right in ways that even her own allies [criticize](#).

Conclusion

Red-brown is a concept used to describe a syncretic landscape of fascist mutations that can adopt a wide range of aesthetics and causes into their illiberal and authoritarian project. A common thread

throughout this landscape are Syria and COVID-19 conspiracies. This article uses examples from the right-leaning or far-right part of the spectrum of red-brown media to begin to outline the phenomenon. Part 2 will dive into the truly shocking core of red-brownism by looking at sites that represent a syncretic mish-mash of Fascism, Conservatism, and Leftism while part 3 will analyze it's tendrils in leftist movements while drawing together a more complete vision for moving beyond this fascist creep.

Note: If the original of a source has been cited, but has since been deleted please check archive.today or archive.org where we have archived them all. If the archive is linked and it doesn't include video content, double check if the original link is still live. Also, this article was contributed to by a huge number of researchers, many of whom are anonymous because of systematic efforts by this network to slander, harass, threaten, bully, and silence them. A special thanks to David Klaus who did a lot of research for this and also even wrote some parts of it. Without all of their contributions this work would not have been possible. When reviewing citations in this article please use discretion about the quality of each source rather than assuming they are all of equally vouched for quality and independence as this type of research requires trawling the fringes and sussing out the reliability of state-influenced materials.

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P.S.

Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right

<https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2020/09/09/spectrum/>

Footnotes

[1] The definition I use for fascism is the minimalist definition of Roger Griffith: Palingenetic ultra-nationalism. I supplement it with a set of typical characteristics that tend to occur in various concentrations and mixes in fascism such as: hyper-traditionalism, authoritarianism, ethno-nationalism, a fifth-column scapegoat, fundamentalism, "revolutionary" violence, syncretism, obsession with order, and illiberalism.

[2] Some of the current resources on red-brownism:

- [Historical legacies and the size of the red-brown vote in post-communist politics](#), UC Press, 2009
- [An Investigation Into Red-Brown Alliances: Third Positionism, Russia, Ukraine, Syria, And The Western Left](#), Libcom, 2018
- [The anti-Semitism Fest Where Russian Spies, Code Pink, David Duke and the Nation of Islam Make Friends and Influence People](#), Haaretz, 2019
- [You aren't Antiwar if you Aren't Anti-Assad's War](#), Pulsemedia, 2018
- [Ecosystem or Echo-System? Exploring Content Sharing across Alternative Media Domains](#),

scholarly, 2018

- [Fascism and the Far-Left: A Grim Global Love Affair](#), Haaretz, 2019
- [The Alt-Right and Global Information Warfare](#), IEEE Journal, 2019
- [Pro-Putin Lobby Group Rewards Bloggers on Both the Right and the Left](#), Bellingcat, 2019
- [The Red and The Brown](#), Slate, 2018
- [What is Red-Brownism?](#), medium, 2018
- Ironically, even Ben Norton wrote about it before he flipped sides in a now deleted [post](#), 2015