

How Assad's War Crimes Bring Far Left and Right Together — Under Putin's Benevolent Gaze

The 'anti-imperialist' left is now shilling for tyrants in Damascus and Moscow. And conspiracy theories are the toxic glue binding them to their fellow Assad and Putin apologists on the alt-right

Alexander Reid Ross

Apr. 17, 2018



Putin has decided to preserve the Assad regime, no matter what: Syrian men carrying babies make their way through Aleppo's rubble following airstrikes, September 11, 2016.

Credit: Ameer Alhalbi, AFP

Compare and contrast:

“We lost. War machine bombs syria. No evidence Assad did it. Sad war-mongers hijacking our nation.”

“Congratulations to all the war hawks and pundits and regime change propagandists who encouraged [Trump]. There is still no evidence that the [Syrian] government carried out last week's alleged attack.”

Little distinguishes these two tweets' content.

But the first is from conservative talk-radio host Michael Savage, and the second, from regular RT contributor and pro-Assad leftist RaniaKhalek.

In recent months, the crossover between leftists and the far-right in defense of Syria's tyrant and Russian geopolitics has become increasingly obvious. Its implications are potentially disastrous for the course of the international left and political society in general.

Most of the stories in the media alleging that the Syrian regime's attacks on civilians are “fake news” have come from the conspiracist and InfoWars founder Alex Jones, and from Breitbart's London outfit, as well as the conspiracy-syncretic and far-right friendly Veterans Today, according to public scholar, Caroline O.



A poster of Syrian President Bashar Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin on a van in Lebanon

Credit: REUTERS

Interesting agreement beginning to form between the left and the right online about skepticism on the Syria story. Meanwhile, the establishment press as usual believes the Pentagon without question or evidence. The push for escalation on TV is overwhelming. #WarDrums

— Cenk Uygur (@cenkuygur) April 10, 2018

But left-wingers have joined the trend, finding common cause on the hard right with their blanket anti-war stance, leading Cenk Uygur of The Young Turks to affirm the “interesting agreement” between right and left over Syria.

Others, like Caitlin Johnstone, have called for the left “to be absolutely shameless about collaborating with people on either side of the ideological divide” on Syria.

Leftists have found in Rupert Murdoch’s media empire a sanctuary to support Russia’s narratives. Just in terms of the past month, Glenn Greenwald joined Tucker Carlson to agree against intervention on FOX News. The Nation’s Stephen F. Cohen denied evidence in the Skripal case on a Sky News Australia program founded by far-right figure Mark Latham.

The pattern’s clear now: When the Syrian army advances or liberates cities from NATO/GCC backed insurgents, insurgents allege a chemical attack. Sources are invariably insurgent activists, NATO/GCC backed White Helmets, & SAMS. Independent confirmation is impossible. Bombs away!

— Max Blumenthal (@MaxBlumenthal) April 9, 2018

Journalist Max Blumenthal went on the Rupert Murdoch-owned Australian network a week later to suggest that Syrian rebels are the most likely perpetrators of the Douma attacks.

In this situation of self-parody, it becomes difficult to tell satire apart from reality.

MSNBC invites on neocons to agree with them that Trump is bad, but few have the courage, like Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham, to invite me on to agree that it’s actually the liberal media, odious Dems and the Deep State who are bad.

— Glem Greenwald (@gggreenwald) April 12, 2018

Meanwhile, in the UK, the Labour Party is experiencing similar left-right controversies.

Watched Corbyn interview on #Marr again. Sorry to say my Party is led by a man who questions Russian responsibility for Salisbury, who rejects action to stop Assad use of chemical weapons, who opposes Humanitarian intervention and gives Russia a veto on UK action #NotInMyName

— Mike Gapes (@MikeGapes) April 16, 2018

Its leader Jeremy Corbyn’s controversial comments on the Skripal case brought widespread condemnations, Labour’s tepid response to the Douma attacks and Corbyn’s rejection of any humanitarian grounds for military action led long-time fascist, Nick Griffin, to declare his intention to vote Labour.

IF he sticks to his guns then for 1st time in my life I will vote #Labour — right now NOTHING is more important than resisting the psychotic rush to #WW3 of Boris & the #neocons Corbyn refuses to blame Assad for chemical attack in #Syria <https://t.co/ifxqeFlqvd> via @MailOnline
— Nick Griffin (@NickGriffinBU) April 9, 2018

Now for some facts.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has confirmed the UK’s account of the Russian source of the poison used against the Skripals in the UK. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the Assad regime and its allies have butchered some 85% of the more than 500,000 lives taken over the course of the civil war. The regime indisputably uses chemical weapons — only one of their numerous techniques for crimes against humanity. The World Health Organization and France have presented compelling evidence regarding the Douma chemical attack.

Yet the Kremlin often relies on murky and unreliable sources linked to the “anti-interventionist” movement for far-fetched denials of war crimes — aided by mass trollfare.

Carlson and Greenwald Blast Media for Headlong Rush to War (Video)
<https://t.co/Rqegm9V0st> pic.twitter.com/BwXLIfMmIU
— Russia Insider (@RussiaInsider) April 11, 2018

Such widespread, and politically promiscuous, attempts at denial — of genocide and crimes against humanity — are as mystifying as they are unsettling.

Shortly after the Douma attacks, extreme-right activist Lyndon LaRouche blamed the UK for staging the chemical attack. Four days later, the Russia Federation’s spokesperson oddly echoed LaRouche’s charges that Britain had helped stage the attack. Regardless of whether LaRouche, who is known for his high-level Russian supporters, influenced or broadcasted the Kremlin’s narrative, the prevalence of such conspiracy theories on the left has an eerie historical resonance.

For many decades, the “preferred target of such theories was the Jews,” notes Chip Berlet, veteran researcher of the far right, in an email, and there’s a nice twist to the Kremlin’s Britain-blaming: “Blaming England and Jews goes back to before WWII and conspiracy theories about the Rothschilds.”

It would help if those contemporary “hoax” spinners on the left would recover even a modest historical perspective to the disastrous consequences of conspiracy thinking, and of embedding with the far right, not least in terms of modern anti-Semitism.

Some leftists still claim Bashar al-Assad is a champion of socialism and “national liberation.” They appear to have conveniently forgotten how Gamal Nasser and Muammar Qaddafi, both one-time Arab world heroes of the hard left, drew support from the anti-Semitic hoax, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the embrace of Nazi war criminals by Nasser, Qaddafi, and Assad’s father, Hafez — not to mention the Soviets’ anti-Semitic campaigns and policies.



Serbian nationalists hold pictures of Syrian President Bashar Assad and former Serbian leader and indicted war criminal Slobodan Milosevic to protest U.S. strikes on Syria. Belgrade, April 2018

Credit: Darko Vojinovic/AP

If those horror stories of left-right syncretism are too far removed from the present, some of the same groups aligned with Assad and Putin will probably recall their own defense of Slobodan Milosevic last decade, well before Russian media gave left-wing groups a platform alongside the right to support Putin’s Russia.

Indeed, it is not merely those reports of alt-right members joining nominally leftist-organized anti-interventionist protests that should cause concern.

At the last Hands Off Syria rally organised in Vancouver by the Stop War Coalition, alt-right people showed up on the same side as the rally organisers, the latter of which who even gave an interview to alt-right media, where they discussed their shared support for Assad.

— Steven R. D. Henderson ☒ (@SRDHenderson) April 14, 2018

High-profile members of the anti-interventionist movement include infamous conspiracy theorist, Vanessa Beeley, who has described meeting Bashar Assad in Damascus in 2016 as her “proudest moment”, and Navid Nasr, who uses alt-right (((echoes))) to identify Jews and boasted of his “Eurasianist” (read: far-right, pro-Russian hegemony) sympathies to a far-right activist.

How have hard left and right come to this moment of unison? Look to the appeal of fascism.

According to Israeli scholar Zeev Sternhell, fascism is composed of a syncretic agreement between the revolutionary left and ultranationalist far right to overthrow the liberal center.

Conspiracy theories, which are core to both hard right and left Syria and Kremlin apologists, can serve to mystify rational contradictions, making such agreement easier.

Whether or not one agrees entirely with Sternhell’s thesis, it is impossible to deny that a synthesis of conspiracy mongering amid collaboration between right and left has been showcased in recent months.

Increasingly, the left seems little more than a propaganda tool in a cynical, “East-versus-West” geopolitical game through which the most serious economic, political, and social contradictions are ignored or obscured. The problems most people face are more complex, and the principle of equality more universal, than is realizable by authoritarian sects or creeds.

The confluence of hard left authoritarians with what’s left of the alt-right around Syria and ultimately Russian geopolitics echoes a broader turn of Western political culture toward a toxic impasse that precludes the genuine solidarity that the left is supposed to champion, in its DNA.

The only hope for progress lies in organized efforts to expose and debunk conspiracy theories, while promoting individual freedom and salvaging ethics from the opportunistic delusions of what British Syrian writer and activist Leila al-Shami has quite rightly called, “the anti-imperialism of idiots.”

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Demonstrators carry signs during an anti-war protest in New York after President Donald Trump launched airstrikes in Syria, April 15, 2018

Credit: KENA BETANCUR/AFP

The Ted K Archive

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