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'A deranged fringe movement': what is Maga communism, the online ideology platformed by Tucker Carlson?

Two young men are promoting a grab-bag ideology celebrating 'honor' and condemning 'global elites' - and winning powerful friends on the right



📷 Jackson Hinkle and Haz Al-Din are the two most prominent spokespeople for Maga communism.
Illustration: Guardian Design/Alamy/The Subject

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In the last few years, a self-styled political movement that sounds like a contradiction in terms has gained ground online: "Maga communism".

Promoted by its two most prominent spokespeople, Haz Al-Din, 27, and Jackson Hinkle, 24, MAGA communism comprises a grab bag of ideas that can seem lacking in coherence - ranging from a belief in the power of Donald Trump's followers to wrest power from "global elites" to an emphasis on masculine "honor", [admiration](#) for Vladimir Putin and support for Palestinian liberation.

The two have been repeatedly kicked off social media platforms for spreading disinformation. Hinkle, for example, was booted from Instagram earlier this year - shortly after claiming in a [series of posts](#) that Ukraine was behind the terrorist attack on a concert hall in Moscow, despite Islamic State claiming responsibility for the act.

Hinkle and Al-Din have been ridiculed by critics as pseudo-intellectual, cravenly opportunistic grifters who have carved out an intentionally provocative niche designed to siphon followers away from other highly online political communities.

"If you look at their policies, like what they actually propose, it's clear that this is a deranged fringe movement that doesn't really have a great deal of articulation," said Alexander Reid Ross, a lecturer at Portland State University and author of *Against the Fascist Creep*, which explored how rightwing movements co-opt the language of the left. "It seems ludicrous, but I would say it's really a symptom of the erosion of rational political life."

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Alexander Reid Ross

Until recently, Al-Din and Hinkle's reach seemed limited to corners of the internet largely populated by young men attracted to their messages on masculinity and US foreign policy. But with their inflammatory and often misleading posts about the Gaza war, and as they rail with increasing frequency against what they view as American imperialism, their footprint is growing.

"Deranged" or not, Hinkle and Al-Din's "movement" is attracting recognition in increasingly high places on the right. Hinkle's defense of Putin's foreign policy has earned him an invitation on to Tucker Carlson's show and [praise](#) from Trump's former national security adviser Michael Flynn. Hinkle and Al-Din have also forged international alliances with the likes of the Russian ultranationalist philosopher [Alexander Dugin](#), whom they met at a conference in Moscow earlier this year.

The founder of Maga communism cultivates a militant aesthetic when he addresses his followers via livestream from his home.

His beard is carefully coiffed, and he often wears an oversized black blazer and black collared shirt. Behind him, swords are mounted on the wall, “to symbolize the war I am waging to defend the message I believe is true amidst mountains of lies”, Al-Din, 27, who streams on Kick and YouTube under the name “Infrared”, said in a phone interview.

Both Haz and Hinkle say they support Trump not out of admiration for the man, but out of the belief that his followers represent the most significant mobilization of the American working class in decades.

They subscribe to social conservatism in a way that appeals to **the growing numbers of gen Z males** who believe feminism is harmful to men, and cast issues such as transgender rights, the climate crisis and racial justice as neoliberal distractions.

“It’s not that we’re against women. We just perceive that the discourse, culture and the political sphere have seen a huge decline in the notion of honor,” Al-Din said. “One of the reasons for that is the decline in basic masculine virtues, the rise of a kind of effeminization, especially of men.” Hinkle has **regularly made anti-trans comments** on his own social media, making declarations such as: “We need to protect our youth from trans terrorists and propagandists.”

“They’re firmly embedded in a corner of social media that is the most vitriolic, terminally online, troll culture,” said Reid Ross.



📷 Haz Al-Din cultivates a militant aesthetic when he addresses his followers via livestream.
Photograph: Haz al-Din

Hinkle and Al-Din's links to communism are tenuous at best, but they may be opportunistically emphasizing the label to tap into shifting attitudes. [Polling](#) has indicated that members of gen Z, even gen Z Republican voters, are more open to socialist ideas compared with previous generations. In a [video](#) debunking Maga communism published last year, the Marxist economist Richard Wolff noted that there's precedent for nationalist movements co-opting communist rhetoric, particularly during times of social upheaval and economic hardship.

"If you're a political movement and you want to get supporters at a time when socialism is attracting more and more interest, well, you might be tempted to grab hold at least of the name," Wolff said, noting that this was a strategy most famously used by Adolf Hitler during his rise to power.

"It's provocative," Hinkle said of his movement's name, smirking, in a 2022 interview with the comedian Jimmy Dore. "But that's why it's trending on Twitter right now."

According to an [infographic](#) regularly recirculated by Hinkle, proposed Maga communist policies include "dismantling big tech", banning "antifa street terrorism", ending "woke academia" and subsidizing gyms in every community. They also propose exiting Nato; deporting the Obamas, Bushes and Clintons to the International Criminal Court; ending "open borders"; and "putting banking into the hands of the people".

Hinkle and Al-Din also claim they're anti-imperialists and cling to the [enduring myth](#) of Trump as the more dovish candidate. Their band of online followers see themselves as pitted against "the unipolar world" and "western hegemony", and they often support authoritarian nations that the US sees as its adversaries, such as Russia, China, Iran and North Korea. Al-Din, for example, told the Guardian that he has a "profound" admiration for North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, in part due to his "resilience in defending the honor and history of Korean civilization".

Neither Hinkle nor Al-Din have typical Maga backgrounds, and they both take a tepid view of Trump, whom they praise as the figurehead of the Maga movement but not necessarily an enduring one.

"We have a saying, as Maga communists, which is that when you go to McDonald's, you don't go for the clown, you go for the burger," Al-Din said in an interview. "Trump is the mascot of the movement."

Before Hinkle was a [cigar-smoking](#) Maga communist who [supports fossil fuels](#), he was a denim-clad Bernie bro and an environmental



📷 Jackson Hinkle in Los Angeles in 2019. Before Hinkle was a cigar-smoking MAGA communist who supports fossil fuels, he was a Bernie bro and an environmental activist. Photograph: WENN Rights Ltd/Alamy

activist. He founded a successful ocean clean-up club at his high school in San Clemente, California, organized a student walk-out to protest gun violence after the 2018 Parkland shooting, was invited to speak at a congressional briefing in Washington DC about decommissioning nuclear power plants, and took a knee at his graduation to protest racial injustice. “He’s the kind of guy that gives you hope about the future,” [one environmental activist leader once told the Los Angeles Times](#) about Hinkle.

In 2018 and 2019, immediately after graduating high school, Hinkle ran (unsuccessfully) for San Clemente, California, city council, and [campaign](#)ed against homelessness and corruption.

By 2020, Hinkle was still entrenched in progressive politics, identifying as a member of the Democratic Socialists of America. But he was also starting to flirt with various personalities considerably outside the progressive mainstream, getting a boost after interviewing the then Democratic presidential candidate Representative Tulsi Gabbard on his YouTube show, *The Dive with Jackson Hinkle*. (He was kicked off YouTube for spreading disinformation and now streams on the fringe platform Rumble.)

Al-Din is the son of Lebanese Muslim immigrants and grew up near Dearborn, Michigan. When he was in college at Michigan State University, he says, he was a full-fledged Marxist. While he claims he’s never voted in a presidential election, he says he was probably most sympathetic toward Bernie Sanders.

When Trump won, Al-Din says, he concluded that the left was “out of touch with actual working people”. Put off by what he calls the left’s association with “so-called alternative sexualities and fringe countercultural tendencies” and lack of patriotism, he started developing the set of ideas he called MAGA communism.

“We were just telling these leftists, these crazy-looking septum-piercing purple-haired leftists, that when you go up to working class Americans

and tell them they have to hate their country, and they have to hate being American, you are aiding the enemy, you are not helping, you're not helping fight imperialism," said Al-Din.

Despite Al-Din's background, Trump's anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant rhetoric didn't bother him, he says. "The whole thing about the Muslim ban, I mean, I really couldn't care less," he said in reference to Trump's 2017 executive orders barring travel to the US from majority Muslim countries. "I didn't really find anything significant about that at all."

Hinkle and Al-Din's paths didn't cross until July 2021, when Hinkle was getting attention online for promoting conspiracy theories rejecting a report that the Syrian government had engaged in chemical weapon attacks. He was invited to appear on a show on the topic hosted by the leftwing streamer Vaush. (Vaush later published [the clip](#) with the title Debating the Slipperiest Conspiracy Theorist I Have Ever Met.) It attracted Al-Din's attention, and the two began messaging.

Later that year, Al-Din visited Hinkle in LA and pitched him on what he calls his take on Marxism-Leninism: Maga communism, which envisions harnessing the populist, nationalist fervor of Trump's base in pursuit of a working-class revolution.

The following year, Russia's invasion of Ukraine offered the perfect opportunity for Hinkle and Haz to promote their new gospel. The conflict animated online armies on [both the far left and far right](#), who expressed strong criticisms of Ukraine's political system and voiced concerns about the expansion of Nato.

"The media lied to you every day for two straight years about Covid," Hinkle [wrote](#) on Twitter/X, days after Russia's invasion. "Why would you believe anything they're telling you about Russia & Ukraine?"

Most recently, Maga communism has glommed onto the Palestinian cause - to the chagrin of much of the movement - which has also helped to amplify its reach.

If Al-Din is the thought leader behind Maga communism, then Hinkle is its salesman. In the six months since 7 October, Hinkle has enjoyed a surge in visibility by pivoting into generating pro-Palestine content online. That's included sharing gruesome images of dead children among rubble in Gaza, posting AI self-portraits in combat gear with the caption "FREE PALESTINE" and hawking coffee mugs with the words "Zionist Tears", sold at \$16.99 a pop. His followers on X leapt from less than 500,000 to more than 2.5 million in just six months, and he has a premium account,

meaning he's entitled to a share of ad revenue according to the level of engagement on his posts.

Al-Din has a much smaller following on X - just shy of 90,000 - but these days, his posts often garner hundreds of thousands, even a million, views, significantly more than he was netting prior to 7 October. Al-Din told the Guardian he makes about \$5,000 a month via streaming. Hinkle declined to say how much he made from his platforms; **according** to the New York Times, he made \$550 last September via X.

Al-Din and Hinkle's position on the Israel-Gaza conflict makes them outliers in the broader Maga movement, which has largely rallied behind Israel. Trump and his allies have cast pro-Palestinian protests in the US as another manifestation of "**wokeness**". Trump **recently** described protesting college students as "raging lunatics and Hamas sympathizers".

While some other young leaders on the far right, such as the white nationalist livestreamer Nick Fuentes, oppose Israel for explicitly antisemitic reasons, Al-Din and Hinkle insist that their position on the conflict is grounded in their broader "anti-imperialist" stance, shared by more prominent conservatives such as Tucker Carlson, who has **also criticized** US support for Israel. Hinkle and Fuentes have been allies in the past; Hinkle and Al-Din have previously streamed on Fuentes' platform Cozy.tv, and Hinkle **said** he had gotten dinner with Fuentes last September. They fell out shortly after following an argument about class politics and the country-folk artist Oliver Anthony's viral song about the working class.

But despite Hinkle and Al-Din's high-profile support for Gaza, the pair were recently jeered at a pro-Palestine event at Emory University. The event was co-hosted by Cair (Council on American-Islamic Relations) and was to feature the political activist Norman Finkelstein. The Emory law student Grayson Walker, the showrunner for Al-Din's Infrared show, was a co-organizer, and added Al-Din as a speaker at the last minute.

In his bizarre speech, Al-Din berated members of the audience, saying that they were responsible for spreading "imperialist and Zionist propaganda and slander against my comrade Jackson Hinkle" and were "just as culpable in the crimes of the Zionists as those who give their dollars and money to them". The audience booed him and shouted "shame on you", after which Cair abruptly canceled the event and put out a statement.

"Today, we unwittingly damaged the movement for Palestinian liberation by allowing a rogue actor to hijack an event intended to highlight the Palestinian genocide," Cair said in a **statement**. "A student co-organizer commandeered this platform by inserting hateful and divisive guests into the program," it continued, adding that the organizer, Walker, had "greenlighted a deeply problematic speech". (Hinkle and Al-Din later

claimed they'd been "canceled" by "the Zionists" and used a homophobic slur to refer to the pro-Palestinian students at Emory.)



I AM LIVE ADDRESSING THE ZIONIST BAN I FACED AT EMORY

UNIVERSITY TUNE IN: <https://t.co/kdAWmxTmXW> pic.twitter.com/xki135iqeG

– Jackson Hinkle 🇺🇸 (@jacksonhinkle) [April 28, 2024](#)

Al-Din and Hinkle see Israel as part of a "globalist" deep state network, while rejecting the notion that such terminology relies on antisemitic dog-whistles. They see Ukraine as part of that same network, as well as Nato, the European Union, and the Biden administration. "We are fighting to win over the hearts and minds of the MAGA common man," Al-Din told the Guardian. "Israel is just as much connected to the same multinational corporations and special interests that MAGA despises."

Al-Din and Hinkle have been suspended or banned from a number of platforms for spreading disinformation, mainly about the Russia-Ukraine conflict or about the war in Gaza. A recent [profile of Hinkle by the New York Times](#) cited research indicating that a network of bots or inauthentic accounts may be responsible for amplifying some of his most incendiary posts. In January, Hinkle's account on X was ranked third for posts [flagged with "community notes"](#); his posts have been repeatedly flagged as disinformation by [watchdogs](#).

Last month, Hinkle posted a video that he claimed showed Israelis "panicking" as Iran's missiles reached Israel. Online sleuths verified [that the video](#) was actually of pop star Louis Tomlinson's fans near the Four Seasons hotel in Buenos Aires.

Asked by the Guardian about charges that he spreads disinformation, Hinkle said he "rejected the question".

Despite Hinkle's apparent penchant for sharing disinformation about contentious world events, he's landed some high-profile media appearances in the last six months. He appeared on former the CNN host Chris Cuomo's show and Alex Jones' Infowars to pitch MAGA communism. Jones, who often goes on red-faced rants about communism, appeared relatively open to what Hinkle had to say.

"Most of the MAGA movement understands that the resources, the land and the means of production of the United States of America should be in the hands of the MAGA working class," said Hinkle. Jones called the idea

“very interesting”. Last month, Jones also changed his tune and began [referring to Israel’s war in Gaza](#) as a “genocide”.

Hinkle and Al-Din have also continued to expand their international reach. In February, they attended a conference in Moscow hosted by a [Bulgarian oligarch who has been placed under US sanctions](#). At the event, called “The International Movement of Russophiles”, Hinkle met Dugin, the ultranationalist philosopher, and the Russian foreign minister, [Sergey Lavrov](#). During the conference, Hinkle [became](#) the first American appointed to the Russophiles’ executive board. Weeks later, Dugin wrote approvingly of Hinkle, Al-Din and “the emergence of Maga communism” in a blog for Arktos, [a far-right publishing house based in Budapest](#).



📷 Alex Jones, who often goes on red-faced rants about communism, appeared relatively open to what Hinkle had to say. Photograph: Mike Segar/Reuters

“These individuals are allies of conservative Tucker Carlson but are also Marxists who support Trump and advocate the ‘Make America Great Again’ (Maga) slogan,” Dugin wrote. “Together, they are committed to dismantling liberal dominance.” Last year, Hinkle appeared on the Russian state broadcaster VGTRK [and claimed](#) “Joe Biden is controlled by a satanic cabal of DC deep-state leadership.”

Reid Ross says Hinkle and Al-Din occupy an overlap in the left-right venn diagram that is probably rooted in an “anti-imperialist” ecosystem that has proliferated online in the last decade.

Last year, Hinkle spoke at an event at the Reflecting Pool in Washington DC called “Rage Against the War Machine”, which was [promoted](#) by Tucker Carlson and hosted by the Libertarian party and the [People’s party](#), which

was briefly affiliated with Cornel West. The event drew together a curious amalgam of far-right and far-left personalities - including Matthew Heimbach, one of the organizers of white supremacist “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, and the former Green party presidential candidate Jill Stein. Participants rallied under the banner of pacifism; [reports from the event](#) suggested overall messaging supported Russia’s war on Ukraine.

A Discord server - essentially a chat room - called “IGG MECHA-TANKIES”, linked to Al-Din’s show Infrared, has about 5,000 members and offers some insight into the movement’s internal dynamics. The general chat is awash with pseudo-intellectual posturing and armchair historical analysis. Members often feature obscure quotes by Bolshevik revolutionaries in their bios, Russian flags, or pictures of a young Kim Jong-un as their profile pictures.

Joseph, who joined the Infrared community two years ago, described the appeal of Maga communism (he declined to share his last name due to privacy concerns). He’s 19, a resident of Kentucky, and works overnight shifts in a factory making air vents for luxury cars.

“I was always sympathetic to Maga, but I’d also liked some of what Bernie Sanders had been saying around the time of his campaign,” Joseph said. But, he said, he found himself feeling alienated from leftist spaces because he considers himself socially conservative.

The emphasis on hyper-masculinity in these kinds of ultra-nationalist or conspiracy-based movements, experts say, often draws in vulnerable men who may crave affirmation or a sense of belonging. “The thing about Haz [Al-Din] and his success as this great leader is that he really understands the cultish aspect of fascist leadership,” said Reid Ross. “Haz has an intensity that makes him seem like a huge believer.”

Their support for Trump does not translate into loyalty to the GOP. Al-Din told the Guardian that his end goal was to “reclaim” the century-old American Communist party, whose numbers have dwindled to 5,000 and which he says has become co-opted by “liberals, federal agents and Democrats”.

An animated propaganda video, made by one of Al-Din’s followers, projects a dystopia where the US government is persecuting known communists. Al-Din escapes from Washington DC with a cache of weapons stolen from antifascists, seeking refuge with midwestern farmers. The video ends with a communist uprising against the government, led by Al-Din, cast as revolutionary folk hero.