

A pro-Russia website that has published conspiracy theories and false information to advance its views, including misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Score: 7.5/100

Ownership and Financing

The website is owned by DRN Media PLC, a public company registered in Cyprus, according to the site's privacy policy and copyright notice.

The Duran runs sponsored articles and other advertisements for products. It is also funded by donations. Articles on the site link to The Duran's PayPal account and to its page on crowdfunding website Patreon. A separate page on the site solicits investors for DRN Media PLC.

The site also links to an online shop that sells Duran-branded merchandise, much of it carrying slogans poking fun at those who criticize Russia, such as a coffee mug that says "Kremlin Bot" and a t-shirt that says "Putin Stooge." The store also carries products with the coat of arms of the Russian Federation.

The site's editor-in-chief, Alexander Mercouris, was a lawyer in England until he was disbarred in 2012 following his pattern of "conduct likely to diminish public confidence in the legal profession or the administration of justice or otherwise bring the legal profession into disrepute," according to the Bar Standards Board in the U.K and reports in the British newspaper The Telegraph. The Telegraph reported in 2012 that Mercouris lied and falsely accused the president of the U.K. Supreme Court of having him kidnapped.

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✗ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

Content

The Duran does not describe its mission or political perspective on the site. However, its profile on Patreon says it is "a news-media platform that advances a realpolitik position The Duran is not right, left or center. It is a media site that focuses on a pragmatic analysis of stories in the news."

The Duran primarily covers global politics from a pro-Russia perspective, often pointing out perceived flaws and weaknesses of Western nations and organizations, including the U.S., the European Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The site publishes both original commentary and reporting in its News section. The Links section contains republished articles from sites such as RT.com, ZeroHedge.com, and TheGatewayPundit.com, all of which NewsGuard has found to have repeatedly published false content.

Credibility

The Duran has published numerous articles promoting false and unsubstantiated information, including in stories about the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, an April 2020 article, headlined “Fighting the invisible enemy: imperial fascism 2020, not covid-19,” suggested that the COVID-19 virus was engineered as a U.S. bioweapon.

“While most activists organize based on COVID-19 being a natural event that’s exacerbated by rabid industrialization, and that it reveals the unequivocal failure of the capitalist system to provide for its people – a very strong unifying argument on its own volition – some venture to argue COVID-19 is a bioweapon that originated in U.S. labs, believing it was first released in China, Iran, and Italy,” the article said.

There is no evidence to support the theory that the COVID-19 virus is a bioweapon. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” An earlier study, published in February 2020 in the journal Nature, found that the COVID-19 virus is “96% percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.”

There is also no evidence to support the claim that the COVID-19 virus originated in the U.S. A March 2020 document from the European Union said that a Russia-led disinformation campaign has promoted the

unsubstantiated claim that the virus “is a human creation, weaponised by the west,” according to the Financial Times.

Another April 2020 article, headlined “The pink elephant in the room regarding COVID-19 and a ‘vaccine,’” also asserted that the COVID-19 virus was engineered. The author’s only evidence to support this claim was the fact that there currently are not vaccines available for other coronavirus strains that infect humans.

“Therefore, if ‘someone’ declares that they have a vaccine, there can only be 2 possible conclusions: 1) What they are giving you is NOT A VACCINE – it has an underlying, alternative effect”, the article stated. “2) This particular derivative of the cold virus was not a naturally evolved species – it was bio-engineered. A bio-engineered virus could have an inbuilt ‘vaccine backdoor’ incorporated into its chemical structure that would permit a vaccine to take effect. As discussed above, if it were a naturally occurring derivative this option would not be available as is evidenced by the fact that we have no vaccines to combat them.”

It is true that there are no vaccines for the four coronaviruses that already circulate in humans, according to an April 2020 article from the BBC. However, there is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus was engineered or contains a “vaccine backdoor,” as the article claimed.

Another April 2020 article, titled “EXCLUSIVE: Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Drops New Bombshell — Bill Gates’ Coronavirus Vaccine Will Pay Out BILLIONS in Profits to Dr. Fauci’s Agency – True Pundit,” claimed without evidence that Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), would personally profit from a COVID-19 virus that the agency is working to develop, with support from Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates.

“That puts your government in bed with Big Pharma and Gates and could pay as much as 50 percent of the profits to the NIH, the parent agency that employs Dr. Anthony Fauci — who again — is lobbying for the vaccine,” the article stated. “Does Fauci get a cut of the bounty too? Or has he already been cut in?”

According to an April 2020 PolitiFact article, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is indirectly funding NIAID's work on a COVID-19 virus vaccine through its financial support of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, a nonprofit that is funding research on several different possible COVID-19 vaccines. There is no evidence, however, that Fauci himself would personally profit from a vaccine. NIAID's work on a vaccine was developed with pharmaceutical company Moderna. PolitiFact did not find a record of a financial relationship between Fauci and Moderna in the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's database.

In a March 2020 article, titled "The Coronavirus Hoax," The Duran falsely claimed that the COVID-19 virus outbreak was tied to 5G cell phone technology. "A Fake Virus Pandemic was Fabricated to Cover-Up a Global Disaster; an Outbreak of 5G Radiation Poisoning," the article said. "The Wuhan Coronavirus pandemic was STAGED to cover-up the public health crisis caused by the intensive 5G roll-out in Wuhan in 2019."

There is no evidence that health effects from the COVID-19 virus are connected to 5G, according to fact-checking articles published in 2020 by FullFact.org and Reuters. A March 2020 report by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection, a Germany-based organization that studies the health effects of non-ionizing radiation such as radio waves, found no evidence that 5G exposure posed a risk to human health.

In 2018, The Duran published several articles that referred to the March 2018 poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England, as a "hoax." An August 2018 article headlined, "US slanders Russia with new sanctions over Skripal poisoning hoax," asserted, "The Duran has followed this case very closely, and there has never been evidence provided by British or international agencies investigating this incident or its sequel that happened last month, to prove conclusively that Russian agencies were involved in poisoning former USSR Spy Sergey Skripal and his daughter Yuliya, in Salisbury in March of this year."

In September 2018, the U.K. charged two men suspected of being Russian military agents with attempted murder in the poisoning of Skripal and his daughter. Then-British Prime Minister Theresa May said in a statement that “the two individuals named by the police and CPS [Crown Prosecution Service] are officers from the Russian military intelligence service.”

An April 2018 post on the Skripal claims, titled “Russian Foreign Ministry: Skripal poisoning hoax ‘designed to justify growing defense spending of NATO’, claimed that “NATO plotted ‘Skripal Case’ to justify military massive spending.” However, the story itself did not include any evidence of a plot involving the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

A March 2018 article ran with the headline claiming, “The poisoning of Sergei Skripal leads right to Hillary Clinton and the DNC.” The article cited reporting by U.K. newspaper The Telegraph that linked Skripal to a security consultant who worked for Christopher Steele, the former spy who compiled a dossier making claims about President Donald Trump’s involvement with Russia.

The Telegraph’s story, however, made no mention of Clinton or the Democratic National Committee. Yet The Duran article said, “All of this begs the question, was Skripal the latest victim of the Clinton mafia’s murder machine?” Multiple fact-checking organizations have debunked the long-running conspiracy theory that suggests that former U.S. President Bill Clinton and former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton had been connected to the deaths of dozens of friends and acquaintances. In 1998, the fact-checking website Snopes examined approximately 50 deaths of people that had been linked to Bill Clinton and determined that no deaths were connected.

Because The Duran’s articles and headline have often included false and unsubstantiated information, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

The website does not post a policy on how it handles errors. In April 2018, the website published a separate article that corrected initial claims that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons determined there was no evidence of chemical weapons at a site in Damascus, Syria. However, because The Duran has failed to correct numerous other false claims in its articles, NewsGuard has determined that the website does not meet NewsGuard's standard for regularly correcting errors.

The Duran does not disclose a political perspective on its website. However, many news articles contain opinionated statements, which often support views aligned with the Kremlin, as well as the Trump administration.

For example, a May 2020 article, titled "Biden Is Everything The Democrats Are: Notes From The Edge Of The Narrative Matrix," said: "Joe Biden is not an 'imperfect candidate' for the Democrats. He is the perfect candidate, because he's everything the party is: Demented. Decrepit. Bloodthirsty. Corrupt. Cronyistic. Authoritarian. Reactionary. Rapey."

In an April 2020 article headlined "#FireFauci Should be the Rallying Cry for a Generation," stated, "It's clear that the plan from the beginning was to allow this virus to run wild in high profile places like New York and Italy to create fear. It is also clear that people like Dr. Anthony Fauci were activated to ensure the worst possible response to the crisis would be implemented in the U.S."

A March 2020 article, headlined "America's Last Revolution or Renaissance," asserted, "The American situation is this. Social unrest and civil war in America are weeks away. Anyone who denies this is a coward, a fool, or a liar; and certainly not aware of American's sense of identity and destiny."

The Duran did not respond to three emails sent to its general editor email address, including one sent in 2020, seeking comment about its history of publishing false information, its approach to corrections, and its lack of separation between news and opinion.

Transparency

DRN Media PLC's ownership of TheDuran.com is mentioned only in its copyright notice and privacy policy, which does not meet NewsGuard's standard for a user-friendly disclosure of ownership.

The Contact Us page provides five email addresses to reach the site's different departments, including one email for the site's editorial leadership, but the site does not name who is in charge on a central page easily accessible to readers. Mercouris is identified as editor-in-chief on his author page and within news articles.

Articles are generally credited to authors, but no biographical or individual contact information is provided. Several authors only use first names or pseudonyms, such as TheDarkMan or Infobrics.

The Duran did not respond to three emails, including one sent in 2020, seeking comment on the site's failure to clearly disclose its owners, provide information about its top editors, and provide information about content creators.

Advertisements and sponsored articles are labeled and are distinguishable from editorial content.

History

TheDuran.com domain name was registered in 2016. DRN Media was registered as a public company in Cyprus that same year.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on May 5, 2020, and its rating was changed, to reflect NewsGuard's determination that TheDuran.com does not meet NewsGuard's standard for avoiding deceptive headlines. The criteria checklist has been adjusted accordingly.

Written by: [Sam Howard](#), [John Gregory](#)

Edited by: [Sarah Brandt](#), [Amy Westfeldt](#)

Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

Sources

Ownership and
Financing

<http://theduran.com/invest/>

<http://theduran.com/disclaimer/>

<https://drnshop.com/product-category/in-the-news/>
<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/complaints-and-professional-conduct/disciplinary-tribunals-and-findings/past-findings-and-future-hearings/?DisciplineID=76984>
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/30/disgraced-barrister-turned-pro-putin-commentator-investigated/>
<http://theduran.com/author/peter/>
<https://drnshop.com/product-category/t-shirts/>
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/9146307/Barrister-struck-off-over-claim-that-senior-law-lord-had-him-kidnapped.html>
<https://drnshop.com/product/coat-of-arms-of-the-russian-federation-magic-mug-modern-design/>
<https://drnshop.com/product/kremlin-bot-magic-mug-front-design/>
<https://drnshop.com/product/eat-sleep-putin-repeat-magic-mug/>
<https://drnshop.com/product/womens-putin-stooge-definition/>
<https://drnshop.com/product/womens-russian-bot-definition/>

Content

<http://theduran.com/top-brexit-official-resigns-triggering-upheaval-in-london/>
<http://theduran.com/russia-charms-guests-with-music-football/>
<http://theduran.com/sore-loser-democrats-try-bolster-failed-russiagate-narrative-by-suing-trump-russia/>
<http://theduran.com/category/lifestyle/>
<http://theduran.com/breaking-donald-trump-jr-sought-advice-from-his-dad-donald-trump/>
<http://theduran.com/trump-to-tsipras-youre-fired/>
<http://theduran.com/russia-not-to-be-isolated-over-crimea-nato-head/>
<http://theduran.com/can-america-ever-come-together-again/>
<http://theduran.com/poland-buys-nigerian-oil-in-latest-attempt-to-cut-russia-oil-dependence/>
<http://theduran.com/moscow-us-leaving-inf-will-put-nuclear-non-proliferation-at-risk-may-lead-to-complete-chaos/>
<https://www.patreon.com/theduran>
<http://theduran.com/category/satire/>

Original article: <https://theduran.com/frances-forever-war/>

ZeroHedge article: <https://theduran.com/the-truce-is-over-trump-considering-ways-to-punish-china-convinced-beijing-will-do-anything-to-make-him-lose-re-election/>

RT: <https://theduran.com/end-of-free-speech-maffick-ceo-host-slam-facebooks-unprovoked-censorship-after-cnn-report/>

Gateway Pundit: <https://theduran.com/kellyanne-conway-drops-a-bomb-implicates-obama-in-oval-office-scheme-to-destroy-trump-video/>

Credibility

Fauci story:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200504180509/https://theduran.com/exclusive-robert-f-kennedy-jr-drops-new-bombshell-bill-gates-coronavirus-vaccine-will-pay-out-billions-in-profits-to-dr-faucis-agency-true-pundit/>

<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/apr/15/facebook-posts/facebook-posts-falsely-claim-dr-fauci-has-millions/>

https://www.who.int/blueprint/priority-diseases/key-action/Novel_Coronavirus_Landscape_nCoV_11April2020.PDF?ua=1

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-clinical-trial-investigational-vaccine-covid-19-begins>

US origin story:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200504183205/https://theduran.com/fighting-the-invisible-enemy-imperial-fascism-2020-not-covid-19/>

<https://www.ft.com/content/d65736da-684e-11ea-800d-da70cff6e4d3>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-disinformation/russia-deploying-coronavirus-disinformation-to-sow-panic-in-west-eu-document-says-idUSKBN21518F>

Bioengineered vaccine backdoor:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200504185410/https://theduran.com/the-pink-elephant-in-the-room-regarding-covid-19-and-a-vaccine/>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-51665497>

5G article:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200504205603/https://theduran.com/the-coronavirus-hoax/>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-coronavirus-5g/false-claim-5g-networks-are-making-people-sick-not-coronavirus-idUSKBN2133TI>

<https://fullfact.org/online/wuhan-5g-coronavirus/>

<https://www.icnirp.org/en/applications/5g/index.html>

https://journals.lww.com/health-physics/Abstract/publishahead/Guidelines_for_Limiting_Exposure_to.99797.aspx

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/mar/12/5g-safe-radiation-watchdog-health>

<http://theduran.com/drain-the-swamp-what-trump-32-point-plan-actually-looks-like/>

<http://theduran.com/cnn-ex-producer-slams-network-for-fake-news-especially-jim-acosta/>

<http://theduran.com/crooked-hillary-calls-on-trump-to-protect-america-against-13-russian-bots/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021222252/http://theduran.com/our-empire-is-coming-to-an-end-says-ron-paul/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021222607/http://theduran.com/breaking-opcw-finds-no-chemical-weapons-at-damascus-research-center/>

<http://theduran.com/2018-grammys-brings-out-hillary-clinton-to-honor-female-sexual-abuse-victims-video/>

<http://theduran.com/sneaky-crooked-hillary-posts-response-sexual-assault-enabling-minutes-trumps-sotu-video/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021160127/http://theduran.com/wada-informer-rodchenkov-attempted-suicide-in-washington-source/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021193551/http://theduran.com/american-government-slanders-russia-with-new-sanctions-over-skripal-poisoning/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021193557/http://theduran.com/interesting-timing-of-skripal-poisoning-hoax-so-close-to-russian-elections-audio/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20191024072446/http://theduran.com/the-poisoning-of-sergei-skripal-reads-right-to-hillary-clinton-and-the-dnc/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021193554/http://theduran.com/russian-foreign-ministry-skripal-poisoning-hoax-designed-to-justify-growing-defense-spending-of-nato/>

<http://theduran.com/russia-not-to-be-isolated-over-crimea-nato-head/>

<http://theduran.com/new-russian-law-safeguards-russian-citizens-from-terrorists-and-us-intel-agencies/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/13/sports/russia-doping-sochi-olympics-2014.html>

<http://theduran.com/oops-two-unexploded-cruise-missiles-delivered-to-russia-from-syria/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021160722/http://theduran.com/hillary-clinton-democrats-have-been-too-civil-with-gop-video/>

<https://history.princeton.edu/people/james-mcpherson>

<https://psmag.com/education/of-course-the-civil-war-was-about-slavery-26265>

[https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-says-syria-plans-gas-attack-in-rebel-stronghold-1536535853?](https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-says-syria-plans-gas-attack-in-rebel-stronghold-1536535853?mod=hp_lead_pos3)

[mod=hp_lead_pos3](https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-says-syria-plans-gas-attack-in-rebel-stronghold-1536535853?mod=hp_lead_pos3)

<http://theduran.com/the-unnamed-source-is-the-greatest-propaganda-trick-in-the-us-arsenal/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021164318/http://theduran.com/the-unnamed-source-is-the-greatest-propaganda-trick-in-the-us-arsenal/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021193551/http://theduran.com/american-government-slanders-russia-with-new-sanctions-over-skripal-poisoning/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021193554/http://theduran.com/russian-foreign-ministry-skripal-poisoning-hoax-designed-to-justify-growing-defense-spending-of-nato/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021193557/http://theduran.com/interesting-timing-of-skripal-poisoning-hoax-so-close-to-russian-elections-audio/>

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/cps-statement-salisbury>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/07/poisoned-russian-spy-sergei-skripal-close-consultant-linked/>

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/12/christopher-steele-the-man-behind-the-trump-dossier>

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/christopher-steele-ex-british-intelligence-officer-said-to-have-prepared-dossier-on-trump-1484162553>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20181021195729/http://theduran.com/the-poisoning-of-sergei-skripal-reads-right-to-hillary-clinton-and-the-dnc/>

<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/clinton-body-bags/>

Original story being corrected:

<https://theduran.com/breaking-opcw-finds-no-chemical-weapons-at-damascus-research-center/>

Correction: <https://theduran.com/correction-apology-opcw-has-not-confirmed-absence-of-chemical-weapons-at-damascus-research-facility/>

News/opinion #1:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200504195100/https://theduran.com/biden-is-everything-the-democrats-are-notes-from-the-edge-of-the-narrative-matrix/>

News/opinion #2:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200504194836/https://theduran.com/firefauci-should-be-the-rallying-cry-for-a-generation/>

News/opinion #3: <https://theduran.com/americas-last-revolution-or-renaissance/>

Transparency

<http://theduran.com/author/justin-prescott/>

<http://theduran.com/author/seraphim-hanisch/>

<http://theduran.com/author/olivia-kroth/>

<http://theduran.com/author/jim-jatras/>

<http://theduran.com/author/federicopieraccini/>

<http://theduran.com/author/eric-zuesse/>

<http://theduran.com/author/alex/>

<http://theduran.com/author/alexander/>

<http://theduran.com/author/finian-cunningham/>

<http://theduran.com/privacy/>

<http://theduran.com/terms/>

<http://theduran.com/disclaimer/>

History

<https://whois.icann.org/en/lookup?name=theduran.com>

<https://efiling.drcor.mcit.gov.cy/DrcorPublic/SearchResults.aspx?>

[name=drn&number=%25&searchtype=optStartMatch&index=1&tname=%25&sc=0&cultureInfo=en-AU](https://efiling.drcor.mcit.gov.cy/DrcorPublic/SearchResults.aspx?name=drn&number=%25&searchtype=optStartMatch&index=1&tname=%25&sc=0&cultureInfo=en-AU)