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# How memes work in solidifying the Alt-Right movement

Emily Foggia; Michael Williams of Public and International Affairs  
School of International Affairs and Relations, University of Ottawa

## Introduction

This research project delves into the radicalization of the Alternative Right (Alt-Right). The Alt-Right is a group of people using the internet and social media to mock others with ironic and simple images called memes. Although memes are often cartoon images or photographs associated with a caption in order to portray a joke, there is a lot more significance to these memes than a joke. These memes deliver political messages to influence not only members of the Alt-Right, but to everyone. Furthermore, a focus is placed on what is known as the Alt-Right's mascot, Kek, and what he represents for the Alt-Right.

## Motivation

There is a lack of research being done in this area. Many people are conscious of the Alt-Right and memes, but do not have full awareness.

- The Alt-Right has emerged as a force in contemporary politics. Thus, an understanding of their tactical use of the internet as their platform and the use of instrumented images helps to better comprehend the Alt-Right's objectives

## Three Main Questions

- 1) What is the Alt-Right?
- 2) How has the Alt-Right grown and strengthened their movement and what tactics do they use?
- 3) What is the ultimate goal of the Alt-Right?

## Methodology

- Interviewed Paul Gottfried, one of the creators of the Alt-Right, about his views of what the Alt Right is today, its place in this world.
- Websites were researched like 4chan, 8chan, Meme Generator, Facebook, Know Your Meme, Youtube and Reddit in order to get an idea of the type of content that the Alt-Right creates and distributes into the world
- Articles, academic journals and research papers were collected and analyzed.
- These sources were also used to grasp a better understanding of the motives for the Alt-Right,

## Results:

The use of memes resulted to the meme war; Alt-Right memes versus Alt-Left memes



-Memes are a different form of rhetoric, accessing different responses from different audiences.

## 3) Icon

-The last step is for these memes to actually make an impact in society.

-Memes have to mean something more than just an offensive joke. The Alt-Right needs a symbol to unite them. The way to do this; the creation of an icon

- Kek became an icon of the movement.
- A fictitious community formed around Kek called Kekistan, with a flag that resembled the Nazi flag, and a national anthem.
- Kek helped to united the Alt-Right, helping to further solidify the movement. (Explaining the Alt Right 'Diety' of their 'Meme' Magic, 2017).



The Nazi flag (left) resembles the Kesistan flag (right)



-Kek is the Egyptian God of chaos, darkness and destruction, aligning with the Alt-Right's views.

## 2) Mobilization by Use of the Internet and Images

-More people are turning towards to internet for entertainment and news in this new age of technology.

-The internet enables for content to travel across vast distances and exist for long periods of time. Thus the internet provides the perfect platform for the Alt-Right to mobilize themselves and their audience.

- Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, 4Chan, 8Chan, Reddit, Meme Generator and Know Your Meme are websites relevant to the rise of the Alt-Right's presence on the internet through their circulation of ideas, content and most importantly images, (Heikkilä, 2017, pg 1).
- The Alt-Right adapted the use of imagery in the form of memes.
- The purpose of a meme is to portray a joke, and enable a reaction from those viewing it. The often Alt-Right utilizes memes in offensive, ironic, dark, and insulting ways
- Often times, memes are used to joke about politics, politicians, groups and ideas. This can make it more appealing, relatable and comprehensible to individuals who would not be captivated by a more traditional portrayal of politics.
- To understand a meme, you have to understand the image, the caption, and the cultural reference in order for it to be effective (Kariko).

Pepe the Frog is a meme that circulated the internet before the Alt-Right existed (2017).



Donald Trump embodying Pepe the Frog and the Alt-Right in a tweet - Credit to Donald Trump on Twitter

## 1) Who Are the Alt-Right?

-The Alt-Right is a loose network of political activists. It is a social movement but not in a traditional sense. They share views of anti-semitism, white nationalism, and patriotism. Ironic and offensive content is one of their strongest suits. The views of the Alt-Right often contradict the views of the Alt-Left, a group similar in extremity but differs in beliefs. The Alt-Right uses untraditional and informal tactics in order to portray and deliver their messages, perspectives and beliefs.

-The Alt-Right supports political incorrectness as a political strategy to counter the 'liberal' biases it sees in contemporary society.

## Conclusions

The information collected distinguishes who the Alt-Right is, how they operate, and what they were able to create. Once they established a base of followers, and a platform to connect with their base, they were able to unite together through their use of memes such as their icon, Kek who symbolizes their movement and unites them together.

## Citations

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