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# How memes work in solidifying the Alt-Right movement

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## Introduction

This research project delves into the radicalization of the Alternative Right (Alt-Right). The Alt-Right is a modernized 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 radicalization of the Alt-Right has emerged drastically within North America in new modern ways. 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

- Created a fake Facebook account to go undercover and converse with members of the Alt-Right
- 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.  
- To understand a meme, you have to understand the image, the caption, and the cultural reference in order for it to be effective (Kariko).

## 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.  
- Kek had the body of a human and the head of a frog. Since Pepe the Frog was already well known in the Alt-Right community, it seemed to be the perfect fit to embellish Pepe into Kek, (2017).

## 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.

- 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 support political incorrectness in a politically correct 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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