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# The Alt-Right: White Supremacism with a Friendly Face

# America’s political landscape is as polarized as ever, with extremism on both sides of the political compass becoming more and more prevalent. One of the more extremist groups online is the Alt-Right. The Alt-Right is a far right, meme-based ideology that has taken a center stage since last year’s election cycle began. While the ideology has its home on message boards like 4chan’s /pol/ and reddit’s /r/The\_Donald, the ideology is fairly widespread and has followers worldwide. The Alt-Right is a dangerous ideology because of its hateful rhetoric of thinly veiled white supremacism and ethno-nationalism.

# A common talking point of the Alt-Right is the adoption of “Politically Correct” culture, with followers decrying the use of safe spaces and trigger warnings as ushering in the downfall of western culture. Many stories of Universities renaming buildings or cities taking down monuments of Confederate generals are often cited by Alt-Righters as examples of “PC” culture run amok, stripping America of its history and heritage. Alt-Righters are also taking issue with a judge’s decision in New York to make intentionally mis-gendering a trans person in a workplace a punishable offense, mostly for the reason that most of the Alt-Right believes transgender individuals to be mentally ill “degenerates”. The Alt-Right also has many issues with letting both immigrants, and Islam into “their” countries. Far right websites are filled with news stories of violent Muslim immigrants in Europe committing heinous crimes, such as rape, murder, and robbery. The Alt-Right contests that immigrants coming from Syria and other Muslim majority country have no place in western society and should not be allowed to immigrate. Alt-Righters believe that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with western values. A common trend and idea in these online circles is the idea that there is a Jewish conspiracy controlling the mass media and banks. The Alt-Right also feels that white people deserve an ethno-state because both Israel and Japan have one and they feel they are under attack by immigrants and that eventually white people will be a minority in what they call a “white genocide”

# As an onlooker to the birth and rise of the alt-right, it is easy for one to say things got out of hand very quickly. The seeds of the Alt-Right were planted by white supremacist Richard Spencer, when he coined the phrase in 2008 to explain a loose set of ideals focusing on white identity and the failings of the popular conservative movement. The Alt-Right did not find much traction in its early years until it took hold on 4chan’s and 8chan’s /pol/ boards during and after an event called GamerGate. GamerGate was a controversy originally centered around ethics in videogaming, as it was found a game developer Zoë Quinn had slept with multiple game journalists and editors in order to receive positive reviews on her game *Depression Quest.* The original meaning of the GamerGate movement was quickly muddled and lost after a few months and with the allying of Zoë Quinn with feminist and video game critic Anita Sarkesian, a feminist with an open disdain for the treatment of women in videogames. The movement shifted towards an anti “Social Justice Warrior” and anti-feminist stance as the white-male-gamer-centric GamerGate movement began to feel persecuted by the critiques of video game. As the dust had settled on the major events of GamerGate the supporters still felt the need for an identity to rally behind, because they felt as majority straight white men, they were “not allowed” to be proud of their race and gender at the hands of the previously stated feminists. Luckily for these people, culture can be found in many places, such as online message boards like 4chan and reddit. Once centralized onto these sites, inside jokes and memes began evolving to reflect their growing disdain for feminism and progressive movements, and even devolving to explicit racism. A key part of the evolution of the mind frame of the Alt-Right is that on 4chan, one posts anonymously, so that even the most heinous things can be said with no repercussions or real backlash. A meme that took hold as a mascot of sorts was a frog named “Pepe”, originally from a comic by the name of “Boy’s Club” by Matt Furie. Through time, edits of Pepe became commonplace as a reaction images used on 4chan. Such edits put Pepe into different circumstances and a recurring theme was to dress Pepe in an SS uniform with a smug face. Around the time the SS uniform edits became popular, the culture of 4chan’s /pol/ board became much more right leaning and openly started to decry progressive movements and minorities in western culture, stating that they have no place in western culture, and that their presence was a result of a Jewish conspiracy to ruin western society. As this culture shifted severely to the right, individuals within began identifying as “Alt-Right”. Since then the movement has picked up speed especially in the pro-Trump crowd.

# The problem at the root of the Alt-Right movement is that it’s based upon the idea of “saving western (and by extension white) culture” and preserving it forever (a thousand year reich). This idea of preserving a culture to stay the same is a futile concept, especially in America. Youtuber Contrapoints said it best, “It's like a kind of Egyptian mummification urge, the feeling that if we could just embalm our own culture and protect it from the whims of time, then it'll never die. But just like mummifying dead bodies for the afterlife, this is a delusion” (Contrapoints). One of the main problems of preserving white western culture, is that as a culture, western culture is one of the most diverse, indulging in food from around the world, and most of the music being based off rock and blues, both being black inventions. Whiteness as a concept is flimsy at most, with in history people such as the Irish immigrants to the US would be considered white, and accepted today, just 150 years ago were discriminated against just as the white supremacists would discriminate against black people now. There is no doubt that the Alt-Right is rooted in white supremacism, especially when one looks at its supporters online, and their rhetoric. The ADL is also cited as saying “In fact, Alt Righters reject modern conservatism explicitly because they believe that mainstream conservatives are not advocating for the interests of white people as a group” (ADL).

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