

Age of the Alt-Right: New-Age Media and White Nationalism in Trump's America

In November 2020, Donald Trump lost his re-election to Joseph Biden. Trump refused to accept his second term loss and instead labeled the election fraudulent. Rhetoric among his supporters spread, stating that a massive amount of Biden votes were unlawfully cast. Trials and investigations were conducted into the validity of the election, which demonstrated Biden's lawful win. Trump and his supporters continued rejecting the legal election outcome, even as Biden was inaugurated as President in January 2021.¹

Using the internet to fuel his followers, Trump and many of his supporters instigated an attempted-coup on the Capitol in January 2021, which led to the death of four rioters and one police officer, and the injury of approximately 138 other officers.² Their attempt to demand that Congress "stop the steal" of the election was unsuccessful. Since then, more than 500 people have been charged with storming the Capitol.³ A week after the attack on the Capitol, Trump was impeached for a second time. The trial was held due to his "incitement of insurrection." He was then acquitted by the Senate 57-43, falling ten votes shy of the required two-thirds majority.⁴

Leading up to the Capitol riots, Trump granted executive clemency to 237 individuals including the Alt-Right provocateur, Steve Bannon.⁵ In November 2020, Trump's illicit election-fraud rhetoric on social media began to be censored. His favorite platform, Twitter, labeled his posts with the disclaimer, "This claim about election fraud is disputed." After the Capitol attack in January 2021, Trump was suspended from his Twitter account for twelve hours. Two days later, his @realDonaldTrump account was permanently banned and the @POTUS, @TeamTrump, and various other Trump Administrative accounts were suspended.⁶ Twitter also deleted more than 70,000 accounts affiliated with election-fraud rhetoric following the Capitol

riot. Other social media platforms suspending Trump include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Reddit, Twitch, and more.⁷

The Declaration of Independence states that all men are created equal.⁸ For the Alt-Right, though, this sentiment is not within their ideals. Rather than all men having the same unalienable rights, the internet-based white nationalist movement believes that the white Christian male is superior. Although the white-superiority mentality is nothing new within the United States, the Alt-Right movement is. Fueled by technological developments within the new-age of media at the turn of the millennium, Donald Trump's campaign and presidency from 2015 to 2021, and the intersection of the two, this new ideology has grown significantly over the last few years. America is now facing a dangerous movement that challenges equality and freedom—no matter the race, sex, gender, ethnicity, religion, or political belief.

Utilizing the anonymity and liberty of the internet, beginning in the 2010s and being fueled by Donald Trump's campaign and presidency in 2015 onward, the Alt-Right has founded an empire through the use of pre-existing websites and social media. These websites include Twitter and Facebook, as well as the creation of their own platforms, such as Breitbart News and InfoWars. The existence of an online haven for supremacists has allowed the movement to grow dramatically. Their ideals can now easily spread across the world with the touch of a finger.

The white supremacist movement has shifted throughout history from Klan meetings to internet forums. Gone are the days when supremacists needed to spend hours networking and vetting to find those with similar beliefs. In the past, if they were to convene en masse, they were often risking their identities and abandoning their anonymity. The previous financial requirements involved with travel, accommodations, and membership fees are also now obliterated.⁹ It is now easier than ever to be a white supremacist through the use of the internet.

Under the Trump presidency, the Alt-Right was emboldened and fortified. With the nation's leader consistently and repeatedly proclaiming hateful rhetoric interpreted by the Alt-Right as within their beliefs, the movement was reinforced. President Trump's bias and discriminatory language both empowered and enabled the new Alt-Right movement to propagate into what it is today. His offensive rhetoric and hateful disposition validated the beliefs of the Alt-Right and their vast intentions to restore America to what it was before: white, Christian, nationalist, and male-dominated.

This research will investigate the connections between Donald Trump's political rhetoric and the Alt-Right's ideology, the way in which new-age media has affected the white supremacist movement in more recent years, and how Donald Trump used the internet to spread his rhetoric across the nation. Many factors contributed to the growth of the Alt-Right. However, the catalyst for the movement was Donald Trump's presidency. With deep ties to the far right, President Trump was the perfect opportunity for the emergence of the Alt-Right, thus creating the Alt-America. This research paper seeks to look at President Trump's role in the emergence of the Alt-Right through his similar rhetoric, use of social media, and involvement with Alt-Right leaders such as Steve Bannon. This paper will find the convergence of the Alt-Right and Trump's ideologies and the use of social media to look at how these two notions helped grow the Alt-Right movement to what it is today.

Methodology

This paper follows the correlational data between Trump's rhetoric and the Alt-Right's ideology through the use of new-age media, particularly social media. To fully grasp the range of ideological issues and specifications of beliefs under those issues, the research focuses on what large Alt-Right players in the movement are saying. Seeing as the Alt-Right leaders would

represent the voice of the collective, looking at what they are saying on Alt-Right platforms, such as their websites and social media, gives a great insight into the majority's opinion.

As for the ideology of Trump, this research follows his tweets in particular. The President was continuously updating the @realDonaldTrump account with his thoughts. These quick quips of thoughts often fall suit under the ideology of the Alt-Right. Due to the nature of his openness on Twitter, there is the assumption that his tweets are a first-hand look at the President's true beliefs. Once the ideology of both Donald Trump and the Alt-Right has been obtained through social media and website posts, correlational data between the two is collected and reviewed. The topics of ideology looked at within the research include the main concerns of both the President and the Alt-Right. These topics include Immigration, "Fake News," Globalism, and Political Correctness/Liberal America.

In order to obtain data on these topics from the Alt-Right, major Alt-Right players' quotes were looked at through their own websites and/or Twitters, as they are the most commonly frequented sites for the Alt-Right. For example, general rhetoric on the Alt-Right can mostly be obtained through the man who arguably started the movement, Richard Spencer. By collecting his rhetoric through his tweets, interviews, and posts on various Alt-Right websites, it can be deduced that his voice speaks for the majority of the Alt-Right Movement. A few other major Alt-Right players will be looked at, such as Steve Bannon and Andrew Anglin, due to their significance to the Alt-Right movement and connections to Donald Trump. Their rhetoric will be compared to Trump's, and the correlations between the two will be revealed.

In order to collect data on Donald Trump's tweets, the website trumptwitterarchive.com will be used to gather tweets following Trump's rhetoric. This website holds a mass collection of all of Trump's tweets from the creation of his Twitter up until the current date. There is a search

engine that allows the user to type in keywords and access a log of every tweet written or retweeted by the President containing that keyword.¹⁰

The research for this paper will use keywords related to multiple rhetorical topics to deduce roughly how many times Donald Trump has tweeted about said specific topic. For example, in order to look at the significance of Trump's rhetoric on immigration in the United States, the keywords "immigrants," "immigration," "immigrate," "emigrate," "illegals," "border," "Mexico," and "Mexican" were all processed through the search engine to collect data on how many times the President has tweeted on this topic. In order to deduce that the tweets regarding these keywords still follow suit with the rhetoric of the Alt-Right, each tweet was briefly reviewed by the researcher. With the exception of a few, every single tweet fell into the hateful rhetoric category. The data collected will then be formed into graphs to easily show the significance of just how many times Trump has tweeted in favor of Alt-Right rhetoric and ideology.

This data seeks to reveal the empowerment that Donald Trump provides the Alt-Right through his use of social media. Using deductive and explanatory research following the number of times Trump has tweeted in support of Alt-Right rhetoric and comparing that data to Alt-Right leaders praise of Trump's openly far-right beliefs, it can be shown that Donald Trump's use of new-age media to profess his Alt-Right rhetoric has emboldened the Alt-Right movement.

The New-Age of Media

Since the turn of the millennium, both social and technological advancements have allowed the white supremacy movement to flourish. Through the use of the internet, they have been able to spread their ideology to millions. While the ideas and beliefs behind the Alt-Right movement are nothing new, the dissemination of their ideas through the internet is. A Senior

Fellow at the Southern Poverty Law Center, Mark Potok, stated that the data they were collecting led them to conclude that “the advent of social media and other more dispersed means of sharing information had created a shift in how extremists shared their ideologies and how they recruited, too.”¹¹ The SPLC maintains that most white supremacists today are no longer members of official groups but rather operate over the internet.

The origins of the far-right's internet use can be traced back to the creation of the platform Stormfront. This white supremacist platform was created in 1990 as a virtual bulletin board for the Senate campaign of David Duke, a former Grand Wizard of the KKK. Eventually, the website went public in 1995 and became the stormfront.com that is still active today.¹² Due to the creation of stormfront.com, around several hundred white supremacists were turning to the internet by 2000.¹³

In 2004, Robert Futrell and Pete Simi attributed the white power movement's success to the newly developed "free spaces" on the internet. These "free spaces" were defined as "network intersections that link otherwise isolated activist networks through physical and virtual spaces."¹⁴ Futrell and Simi concluded that the use of cyberspace would massively affect the white power movement by creating a new and easier platform to find existing members and to seek out potential recruits.

With the creation of new platforms and websites gaining traction, the traditional magazine *American Renaissance* converted their publishings to the internet. After a decade of shipping out the original magazine, in 2000, they added a virtual magazine for their readers. By 2012, they ceased all shipments of the magazine and transitioned entirely to an online presence. The editor of *American Renaissance*, Jared Taylor, wrote to their subscribers about the decision to go virtual:

Dear Subscriber;

We will be shifting our efforts from the monthly publication into what we expect to be the very best race-realist website on the internet... We have seen the costs of printing and mailing continue to rise while, at the same time, more and more people look to the internet for information.

When we began publishing in November 1990, it was tough to get unorthodox information about race. The only way to find out about them was through luck, word of mouth, or diligent library research... There was only a meager network of racially conscious whites who rarely met each other. The internet has given rise to scores of racially conscious websites, and it has become easy to find like-minded people.¹⁵

In the twentieth century, news organizations tried to present information in an unbiased and objective way. Bias was meant to be avoided at all costs, and facts were supposed to be highly proven with evidence. In 1949, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) enacted the Fairness Doctrine with the purpose of enforcing strict rules on broadcast media. The doctrine required any entity functioning under a broadcasting license needed to present unbiased news and cover all sides of an issue. Under these rules, the media was rewarded by presenting truthful, unbiased, and fair reports. Everything changed, though, when the Fairness Doctrine was repealed in 1987.¹⁶

The new media era began with the founding of FOX News in October 1996.¹⁷ The network purpose was to showcase solely Republican and Conservative ideas and news. This creation of biased news networks quickly led to the "narrowcasting" seen today: where producers of news seek to gain readers for profit rather than share credible and unbiased news. They seek to reinforce the readers' already existing viewpoints rather than inform them of all sides. The new media also rewards the speed of news rather than accuracy. It is seen as more important to be the first to report on a topic whether or not the content is yet proven as true or false.¹⁸

The rise of the internet created a new medium for political discourse and gave birth to the Alt-Right movement. As it became more challenging for those with a racial bias to openly voice

their opinions without persecution, the internet opened an entirely new platform for supremacists to express their ideology without social reproach. The Alt-Right success can be attributed to the internet's lack of "opportunity costs—the energy, money, and psychological energy it takes to meet people, establish connections, and mobilize actions among groups of people."¹⁹ By anonymously joining a movement for free by merely owning an internet-accessible device, the Alt-Right became the new haven for white nationalists.

An expansive network of right-wing platforms has been created during this new digital era. A few of the most successful far-right websites that the Alt-Right frequent are Breitbart, Infowars, 4chan, American Renaissance, and Occidental Dissent. Social media sites such as Twitter, Reddit, and Facebook have also played vital roles in the movement's growth—although there have been increased monitoring of hate groups on these sites in the past few years. Andrew Anglin created The Daily Stormer in 2013, one of the most well-known Alt-Right sites. It focuses on the sense of victimhood and marginalization that the Alt-Right strongly believes they are the subject of.²⁰

Another significant Alt-Right player, Alex Jones's Infowars, is known as the conspiracy-mongering site at the center of many Alt-Right ideologies and conspiracy theories.²¹ Infowars is used to "fuel right-wing paranoia and propaganda."²² Infowars truly emphasizes the concept of the "false flag," used as a claim that anything potentially damaging to conservative values must simply be false. It is the concept that anything that has gone wrong, whether it be a scandal, a mass shooting, or an economic crisis, must be the fault of liberal policies or a plot by liberal players to undermine the conservatives.²³ Without a doubt, the most prominent way that the Alt-Right represents themselves in our society today is through the internet.

The Ideology of the Alt-Right

It is difficult to know the exact size of the Alt-Right, but by looking at ratings data on Alt-Right platforms, it can be estimated. For example, one of the most popular Alt-Right websites, InfoWars, amasses over 10 million listeners and viewers every month. This amounts to those on that particular platform and does not account for viewers on other websites or those who believe in the ideology without actively participating in its online universe.²⁴ The founder and editor of another White Nationalism/Alt-Right website, Occidental Dissent, Brad Griffin, stated that the movement is "so anonymous and online-based that no one truly knows" the actual size.²⁵

For *The Rise of the Alt-Right*, Thomas J. Main collected data on the influx of popular Alt-Right websites. By looking at 136 different web magazines considered to be Alt-Right, he found a general idea of how many Alt-Right supporters there are frequenting these websites. Between 2015 and February 2018, Main found an increase of 154 percent during that time—amounting to a total monthly average of 3,633,731 visits to total Alt-Right sites. Websites such as The Right Stuff and VDARE had over 300 percent increases in monthly visitors between 2015 and 2018. The website Breitbart, which is often considered "Alt-Lite," was also found to have 57,794,889 monthly visitors during that period.²⁶

It is evident that the Alt-Right is massive with millions of supporters—but who is the Alt-Right? What are its members' beliefs and ideologies? In 2016, Alt-Right site Daily Stormer editor Andrew Anglin self-described the Alt-Right as "... a 'mass movement' in the truest possible sense of the term, a type of mass-movement that could only exist on the internet...The Alt-Right is an online mob of disenfranchised and mostly anonymous, mostly young white men."²⁷ As for the women of the Alt-Right movement, their inclusion is widely unknown and needs to be studied further.

For the Alt-Right, being a "real" and "true" American usually means being a natural-born American citizen, white, Christian, and a man. Their goal is to mobilize together to assert their dominance of national and racial pride against those who challenge or seek to alter it. At the center of the Alt-Right ideology is the idea that the United States is a white nation, both culturally and demographically.²⁸

The Alt-Right believes that their white pride is not inherently racist, but rather a notion of pride in their culture and a tactic to ensure the continuation of their bloodline. Under this idea of self-preservation of the white bloodline, the Alt-Right claims that their ideologies and actions are not racist but rather self-defense. This idea is normally summed up in what the movement labels "The Fourteen Words." The Fourteen Words encapsulate the heart of the movement and the reasoning behind their actions: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children."²⁹

Under the Alt-Right ideology, the current biggest threat to white people in America is the influx of immigrants within the United States. They believe that no immigrants should enter the country unless they are from Western European countries.³⁰ Under their ideals, all current nonwhite immigrants who are in the United States, both documented and undocumented, should be removed in order to preserve the white race; "Such exclusionism is, from the Alt-Right point of view, the only way to protect 'American' culture and society from corruption by inferior peoples and inferior cultures."³¹ They believe that anyone unwilling to fight for white power and against those threatening it are agents of destruction of the white race.

Trump and the Alt-Right Ideology

Trump has had a long history of engaging with Alt-Right Ideology. Long before he ran for president, he was supportive of popular Alt-Right ideals, personally promoting and stating his

affiliation with White Nationalistic ideals and principles. During his campaign, he led with the promise of pro-Alt-Right policies such as border control and immigration reform, and he even brought in an Alt-Right activist, Steve Bannon, to run his campaign. Overall, his rhetorical style centered around Alt-Right ideals and massively appeals to their movement.

An Alt-Right element that Trump relies upon heavily is the nationalistic ideals of his “America-First” mentality.³² Both Trump and the Alt-Right use nationalism to assert dominance over those who do not fit into their ideal America. This rhetoric is usually just a nicer way of stating that his policies are xenophobic. Trump began promoting xenophobia before his campaign. Donald Trump encouraged—if not began—the hunt for President Barack Obama’s birth certificate, otherwise known as the Birther movement.

In March of 2011, Trump began appearing on shows on ABC, NBC, and FOX to assert his concerns for President Obama's place of birth and his birth certificate's location. In April 2011, he claimed to have personally hired investigators to search for Obama's original birth certificate in Hawaii (although he never released any findings from his investigators).³³ Although Barack Obama was born in Hawaii to an American woman and a Kenyan man, rumors spread across the internet that he was actually born in Kenya.

Obama’s opponent, John McCain, was born in Panama. Born to two American citizens, his father was a U.S. Navy Admiral overseas in the Panama Canal Zone at the time.³⁴ It is indisputable that McCain was not born in America—and yet there were no objections to his legitimacy to run for President. Within Article II, Section I of the U.S. Constitution, the "natural born citizen" clause states that "No person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of the President."³⁵

This proves that even if Barack Obama had been born in Kenya after all, his legitimacy to run for President would be at the same level of legality as John McCain. The hunt for Obama's birth certificate was really a hunt for a reason to denounce the first black president as unfit to run the country. The Birther movement was based on racism and xenophobia rather than a genuine concern for Obama's birthplace.

Trump continued to slander President Obama even after his birth certificate was revealed—stating that it was likely fake. In 2012, with the creation of Twitter, Trump took the website by storm, insisting that Obama not only released a fake birth certificate but also claiming that he was the founder and leader of the terrorist group ISIS.³⁶ In 2016, ABC News found sixty-seven instances of Donald Trump tweeting about President Obama's citizenship.³⁷ This witch-hunt for Barack Obama's birth certificate was significantly popular among the white supremacist movement. It gave a reason and an excuse to blatantly disregard Obama as the U.S. President without directly linking their reasoning to racism.

Another way the Birther movement was quite clearly about race was how the movement questioned Barack Obama's educational history. The demands for his birth certificate also extended to demands for his high school and college transcripts. The Birther movement claimed that because Obama is African American, he must have earned his admission into Columbia and Harvard through Affirmative Action Policies rather than through his hard work and grades.³⁸

The conspiracy theory also had many ties to the theory that not only was President Obama not born in the U.S., but he was also a Muslim. In either case, whether Obama was born abroad or was Muslim, according to the U.S. Constitution, neither would have affected his ability to become president. Article VI states that “no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification of any office or public trust under the United States.”³⁹ Again, it is obvious that the

Birther movement was led by roots of supremacy and nationalism rather than legitimate concern for the validity of Obama's birthplace. The Birther movement introduced the rise of the Alt-Right, who were gaining power and support before their vast emergence in the 2016 election.

The conspiracy theories that Obama was born in Kenya, that he did not fairly earn admission to universities, and that he was Muslim were all widely supported by Donald Trump. The creation of conspiracy theories is an element massively spread across Alt-Right ideology. They use conspiracies to explain the changing of America from a white nation to a diverse one.⁴⁰ Conspiracy theories create an explanation as to why their country is no longer recognizable to them. In "Alt-America," Main states that "conspiracies provide a clear, self-reinforcing explanation for a sense of personal disempowerment."⁴¹ Both Trump and the Alt-Right often use conspiracy theories to defend their self-image and maintain their power.

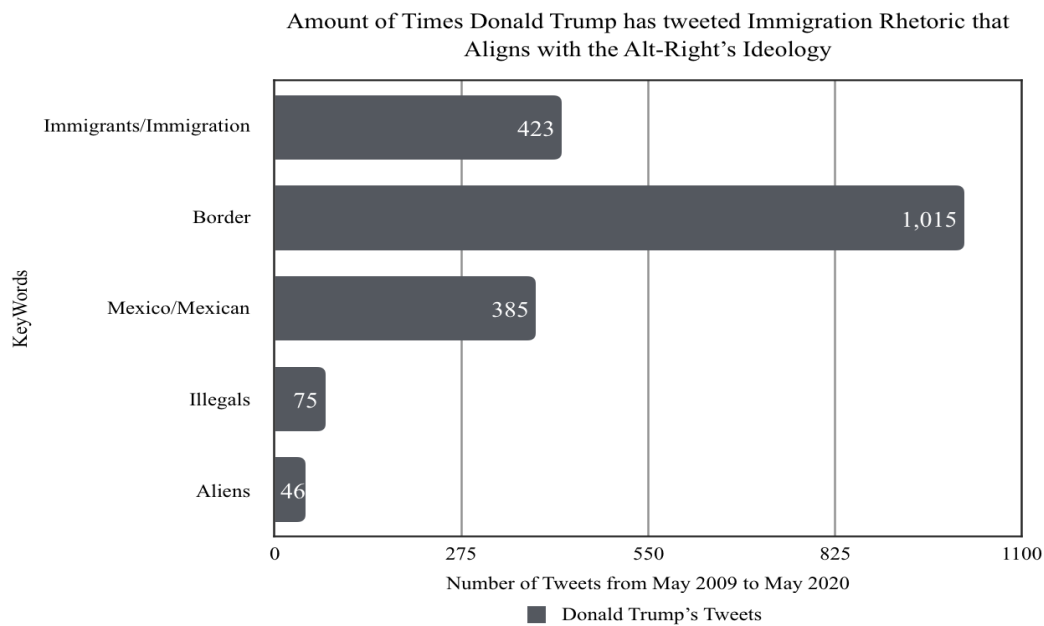
The Birther movement was just the start of Donald Trump's involvement with the Alt-Right. Similar to the Alt-Right movement, Donald Trump often promotes xenophobic and hateful rhetoric toward outsiders. One of his campaign's leading elements was the promise to build a wall to divide the U.S. and Mexican border and deport all of the pre-existing undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S.⁴²

When announcing his candidacy on June 16, 2015, he stated that "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with them. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists."⁴³ In the past, Trump claimed that U.S. political leaders were more concerned about helping immigrants and foreigners in the name of globalization rather than helping their own American people. In just his announcement speech alone, Trump mentioned virtually all of

the main concerns of Alt-Right activists: immigration, globalism and foreign countries, the failing economy, the liberal agenda, and more.⁴⁴

In his speech, he stated that liberals were trying to promote illegal immigration in an attempt to replace "real" Americans with "illegal aliens" in order to gain power over the United States. He claimed that the U.S.'s crime rate was skyrocketing due to the influx of crimes supposedly being committed by undocumented immigrants coming through the Mexican border.⁴⁵ These claims about immigration within the United States confirmed the fears of the Alt-Right, that America was under attack, and Donald Trump was their saving grace.

Throughout Trump's campaign, he continued to attack immigrants through constant rhetoric on the danger they were to the American people. Using the website trumptwitterarchive.com, which contains every tweet from Donald Trump's account since its creation in May 2009 up until May 2020, it can be seen that Donald Trump has tweeted anti-immigration rhetoric that has aligned with Alt-Right ideology more than one thousand times. After reviewing these tweets, only a few were unbiased and not negative rhetoric. He negatively tweeted the word "immigrants/immigration/immigrate" 423 times, "border" 1,015 times, "Mexico/Mexican" 385 times, "illegal/illegals" 75 times, and "alien/aliens" 46 times.⁴⁶



On June 24, 2018, Trump tweeted, "We cannot allow all of these people to invade our country. When somebody comes in, we must immediately, with no Judges or Court Cases, bring them back from where they came. Our system is a mockery to good immigration policy and Law and Order."⁴⁷ This is one of many tweets from Donald Trump confirming the Alt-Right's concerns that undocumented immigrants are "taking over their country." Both the Alt-Right and Trump proclaim that immigrants, especially Latinx immigrants, need to be stopped at all costs from entering the country, and the millions of current illegal immigrants within the U.S. need to be deported.

Jared Taylor, the editor of *American Renaissance*, published an article on August 20, 2015, titled "Is Trump Our Last Chance?" Taylor, one of the leaders of the Alt-Right movement, proclaimed that Trump's campaign platform was entirely in line with what the Alt-Right was seeking—"Mr. Trump has single-handedly made immigration the key issue of this election. His heart is in it when he says we need to build a wall, deport illegals, and have an immigration 'pause' until every American who wants a job gets one."⁴⁸ Taylor expressed that even if Trump were unable to have success with mass deportations, that he would have significant successes

with a few other policies: tripling the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents,⁴⁹ banning immigration from “terror-prone” countries (aka majority-Muslim countries),⁵⁰ ending federal support payments to sanctuary cities,⁵¹ and ending federal benefits to undocumented immigrants.⁵²

On April 19th, 2018, Donald Trump tweeted, "Democrats are the problem. They don't care about crime and want illegal immigrants, no matter how bad they may be, to pour into and infest our country, like MS-13. They can't win on their terrible policies, so they view them as potential voters!"⁵³ Both the Alt-Right and Trump proclaim that immigrants, especially Latinos, are being allowed into the country by liberals to gain Democratic votes.

This theme was seen during the 2016 election: that the Obama administration had been purposely letting migrants into the U.S. to vote for presidential-candidate Hillary Clinton. After the election, Trump claimed Clinton had not won the popular vote because millions of voters were illegal immigrants. "In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally," Trump tweeted on November 27, 2016.⁵⁴

Trump and New-Age Media

The tactic of simply disregarding news that seeks to challenge someone's character or ideologies is commonly used by Donald Trump. Since the beginning of his campaign, Trump has been attacking mainstream media outlets. He has gone as far as labeling them the “enemy of the people.”⁵⁵ His disapproval and hatred for the press has only gotten worse as media scrutiny of him has increased. This leads to the victimization that Trump so often turns to when defending himself against bad publicity. When the press attacks him, he simply turns it back around to label them "bad people" or state that they are reporting "fake news."⁵⁶

The 2016 Trump campaign often struggled with public and political scrutiny due to his far-right views and media portrayal. Trump found it vital to defend himself in all ways possible—even if that meant lying. He would undermine anyone who criticized him, any platform that did not outwardly support him, and any politician who was running against him. Similar to the Alt-Right, the Trump campaign would attack the credibility and trustworthiness of the press and people that challenged him. In April 2018, the *New York Times* found that President Trump had either “attacked, mocked, or denigrated 459 people, places, or things since becoming president.”⁵⁷ All of these attacks had been on one social media platform, Twitter.

Since Trump was so vulnerable to bad press, he found a new strategy of engaging with the American people. Through the use of social media, he forged connections with platforms that allowed him to gain large followings with little to no gatekeeping to what he posted. Donald Trump found that Twitter was the easiest platform for him to speak to his supporters freely. He has been able to attack or praise whomever he would like, announce whatever he deems fit, and engage with any other account he chooses. In June 2017, the *New York Times* released an article stating over one hundred false statements had been given by Trump during just his first six months of presidency. The majority of these were on Twitter.⁵⁸

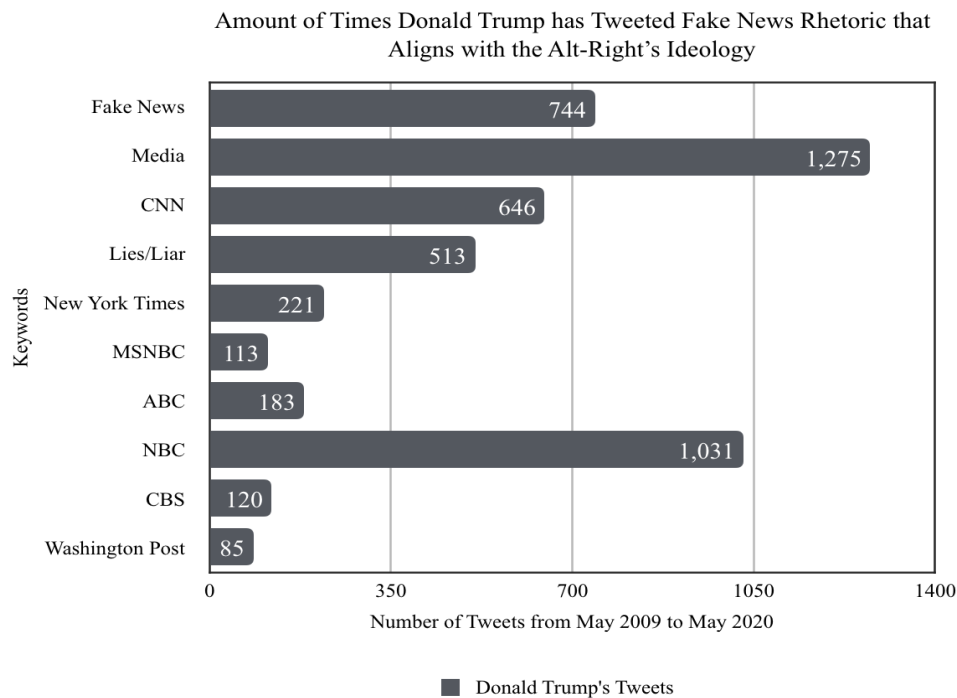
Twitter truly encapsulates the new-age of media by creating a platform where anyone can share “news” with the touch of a finger. In 2006, Twitter was created for the use of sharing quick blurbs of thoughts and information. Initially limited to 140 characters, it was meant to be used for social media purposes rather than news reporting.⁵⁹ Now however, Twitter is commonly used to share news within the now 280-character limit. Many users will simply look at a tweet without doing further research into its validity or even clicking on the article attached to continue reading. Their news is then often limited to the 280 characters provided.

This shift in media, through now easily accessible platforms, created a new method of news sharing. With new technology allowing anyone with a device to become “newscasters,” it quickly became unclear what was credible.⁶⁰ This new meaning to “Freedom of Press” led to many being unsure if what they were reading was truly reliable. This further encouraged readers to stick to their biased platforms they know and trust without bothering to “fact-check.” As Neiwert states, “Eventually we settle into patterns of gathering information that we become comfortable with as we learn to recognize reliable sources of facts.”⁶¹ With so much unreliable news spreading across the internet, it became common to simply excuse news as “fake” if it was not what the reader wanted to hear. If a piece is seen as damaging or harmful to the reader’s ideologies, they will simply refuse to believe it.

It is quite common, particularly within the Alt-Right, that if a piece of information undermines or challenges the viewer’s political ideology, to declare it fake. This rhetoric has often led to a reliable source providing accurate reporting to be labeled “fake news.” In contrast, propaganda and actual fake news sites can easily be confused as trustworthy.⁶² Today, with the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, news can be shared among millions whether or not it is true. Moreover, anything the reader agrees with is instantly deemed truthful, and those opposing will be labeled as false- or “fake.”

Since the creation of Trump’s Twitter in May 2009 up until May 2020, Trump has tweeted constantly about “fake news” and the media. This rhetoric aligns with the Alt-Right ideology that the media is biased against them and is run by the liberal agenda. Trump has tweeted "fake news" 744 times, "media" 1,275 times, "CNN" 646 times, "Lies/Liar" 513 times, "New York Times/NYT/NYTimes" 221 times, "MSNBC" 113 times, "ABC" 183 times, "NBC" 1,031 times, "CBS" 120 times, and "Washington Post" 85 times. Almost every one of these

thousands of tweets was negatively labeling the American media as "fake" simply because they spoke out against Trump and his hateful rhetoric and policies.⁶³



In February 2017, Trump held a press conference solely to speak out against fake news. He stated that "the press has become so dishonest that if we don't talk about it, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the American people. We have to talk about it, to find out what's going on because the press honestly is out of control. The level of dishonesty is out of control."⁶⁴ It is true that the amount of fake news across the internet is immense and needs to be addressed, but the fake news Donald Trump is referring to is generally fact-checked as legitimate. Instead, he labels the news as fake simply because it attacks him, not because it is false. The morning after the press conference, he tweeted, "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN), is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!"⁶⁵ Trump's

constant berating of the "fake news" media is ironic because he blatantly labels legitimate media sites as "fake" while praising sites that are confirmed as having released false articles.

An example of Trump supporting genuine fake news was on March 4, 2017, when he posted a tweetstorm claiming that Obama wiretapped Trump Towers, "Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my 'wires tapped' in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!" Again, he tweeted, "Is it legal for a sitting President to be 'wiretapping' a race for president prior to an election? Turned down by court earlier. A NEW LOW! I'd be a good lawyer could make a great case out of the fact that President Obama was tapping my phones in October, just prior to election!" He continued, "How low has President Obama gone to tap my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon/Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy!"⁶⁶ It was later revealed that Trump had gotten this idea from Breitbart News, which had very sketchy anonymous sources as their reasoning behind the story. Fact-checkers quickly disputed the conspiracy theory as false.⁶⁷

This was not the first time Trump got his news and rhetoric from Alt-Right websites and publicly supported their sentiments. In December of 2015, Trump went on notorious Alt-Right leader Alex Jones's *Infowars* for an interview. Trump told Jones that his "reputation was amazing" and that he "will not let him down."⁶⁸ In the months that followed, Jones began publishing, claiming that the election would be rigged in Clinton's favor. He begged Trump to speak out about the theory and make it a campaign issue on his show. Only two days later, Trump followed Jones's advice, and in a rally in Columbus, Ohio stated that the election was "going to be rigged."⁶⁹

Alex Jones himself was shocked that Trump would follow his conspiracy theories so closely and publicly advertise them during his campaigning. Jones claimed that his numbers

were going up massively every time Trump mentioned one of his conspiracy theories. Trump even went as far as to directly tweet Jones’s rhetoric onto his Twitter feed for his millions of followers to see repeatedly throughout the election.⁷⁰ August of 2016, Jones gushed about the influence he had on Trump “I’ll tell you it is surreal to talk about issues here on air and then word for word hear Trump say it two days later... and it just shows how dialed in this guy is and that’s why they’re so scared of him.”⁷¹ This direct connection shows how deep the ties between Trump and the Alt-Right lie.

Within the last decade or so, the level of trust with the media has fallen drastically. The skepticism of truthful reporting has gotten so high that some will refuse to believe any and all mainstream media or government officials- especially if they oppose what the reader believes to be true.⁷² This is particularly true within the Alt-Right. Any kind of authority that is not within their movement or ideology will instantly be considered false. Polls from Gallup highlight that the public's trust in the press has steadily declined since the 1990s, with a drastic drop between 2015 and 2016. During Trump's election, the Republicans’ trust in mass media hit an all-time low of 14 percent.

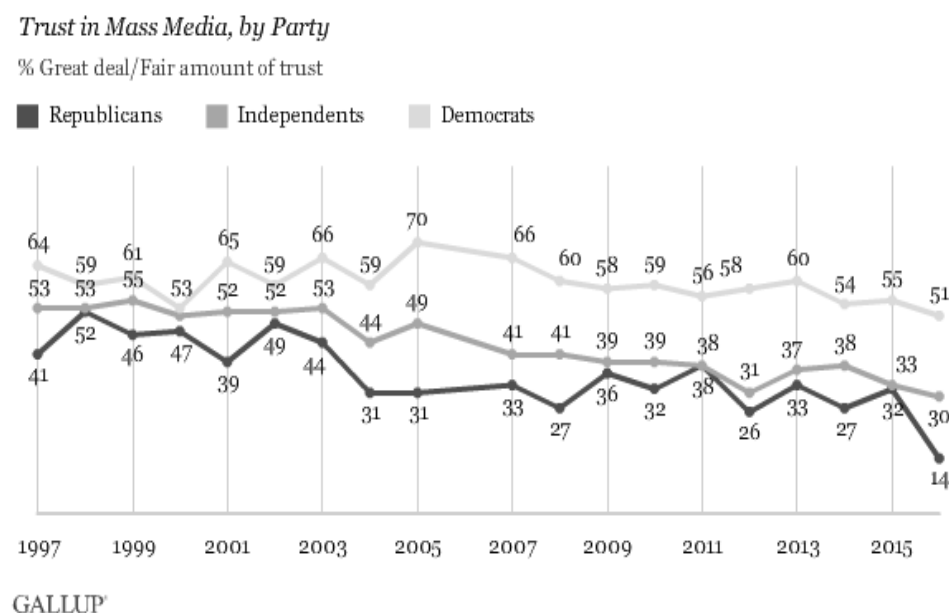


Figure 1:
 “Great deal”/
 “Fair amount” of
 trust in Mass
 Media, by Party
 from 1997 to
 2016⁷³

Political Scientists Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler studied the web traffic data of fake news in America during the 2016 Presidential elections. They looked at the pattern of how often Americans visited fake news sites between October 7 and November 14, 2016. They found that one in four Americans from their sample had visited fake news sites at least once during that period. Their data also revealed that Trump supporters visited the fake news websites the most often. Interestingly enough, the fake news sites that were most highly visited were “overwhelmingly pro-Trump.”⁷⁴

The victimization that Trump exudes by attacking those who undermine his power, labeling any bad press as 'fake news,' and merely lying when he is challenged, are all common themes tied to the Alt-Right. Within the Alt-Right movement, they feel they are victims of the today's America. They no longer believe they, the white man, are at the top of the hierarchy due to an influx of immigrants.

The Alt-Right also believes they have become victims to the liberal agenda's rise in “political correctness.” Political correctness refers to the efforts people make to respect the different identities of others. This includes avoiding offensive remarks towards someone's race, religion, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other social characteristics.⁷⁵ The Alt-Right argues that being forced to use specific terminology is a political tactic by liberal America in order to seize power from white men and give it to women, minorities, and liberals. According to the Alt-Right, America is in a racial and cultural war against white people, and Donald Trump is leading the far-right defenses. They insist that Trump's language is both empowering and energizing to their movement because he refuses to follow “political correctness.”

Trump's Use of New-Age Media to Embolden the Alt-Right Ideology

The way that the Alt-Right reacted to Trump's presidential win shows how significant their support was to the campaign and just how deep their ties were to Trump's win. After the election, many of the Alt-Right and white supremacist leaders took to the internet to claim credit for Trump's victory. Richard Spencer tweeted, "The Alt-Right has been declared the winner. The Alt-Right is more deeply connected to Trumpian populism than the 'conservative movement.' We're the establishment now."⁷⁶

Andrew Anglin posted on the Daily Stormer to say, "Our Glorious Leader...", often a nickname for Trump in the Alt-Right community, "... has ascended to God Emperor. Make no mistake about it: we did this. If it were not for us, it wouldn't have been possible... The White race is back in the game. And if we're playing, no one can beat us. The winning is not going to stop."⁷⁷ Even David Duke tweeted, "Make no mistake about it, our people played a HUGE role in electing Trump!"⁷⁸

Despite Trump not outwardly claiming his support for the Alt-Right, it is quite apparent to the movement that they feed off of one another. Trump emboldens the Alt-Right movement, excuses their behavior, and affirms their rhetoric so much as to adopt it as his own. The Alt-Right supports Trump by providing him with rhetoric to gain the support of the masses, obtain Trump votes through the use of the internet, and backing his rhetoric through articles, tweets, videos, etc.

The intersection of all three: new-age media, the Alt-Right, and Donald Trump can all be seen with Steve Bannon. As the former head of the Breitbart News Network, Steve Bannon was a substantial Alt-Right player before being hired as Donald Trump's campaign manager. The hiring of Steve Bannon to run Trump's campaign was most likely a deliberate plan to gain even

more support from the Alt-Right. As the former editor and manager of breitbart.com, Bannon was the one to change Breitbart from a common conservative news platform into an Alt-Right white nationalist site.⁷⁹

Once Bannon took control of Breitbart, the website began attacking big government, gun control, undocumented immigrants, political correctness, LGBTQ rights, among many other common far-right themes. In July of 2016, Bannon himself stated that Breitbart was “the platform of the Alt-Right.”⁸⁰ Richard Spencer once labeled Breitbart as being a “gateway to Alt-Right ideas and writers.”⁸¹ Trump's choice of Bannon as his campaign manager, spokesperson, and adviser all further prove his affinities to the Alt-Right. Not only did Trump bring Bannon into his campaign and presidency, he also frequently tweeted articles and quotes from Breitbart. Trump's anti-immigrant, anti-globalist, populist, nationalistic, and xenophobic policies all fall in line with the same rhetoric shown on Breitbart. Bannon is physical proof of the intersection between Trump, the Alt-Right, and both parties' use of the internet.

Conclusion

Trump found a loyal base waiting for him. Building tensions and anger for years, the Alt-Right movement was waiting for a leader who would finally support their rhetoric by enforcing drastic policies. Slowly gaining power through the use of the internet, the Alt-Right was patiently waiting for the day a candidate would support their white nationalistic causes and give them the platform they needed to grow to their full potential. The Alt-Right found a supporter, sympathizer, and defender in Donald Trump.

Long before he ran for office, Trump had a history of white nationalistic tendencies. Through the Birther movement, his support of Alt-Right ideologies, and his constant feigned victimization from the same forces that many alt-righters claim are targeting them, Trump was

the perfect candidate to lead the Alt-Right. Trump's slogan, "Make America Great Again," fully embodies everything that the Alt-Right seeks through their movement. They want to gain back the America they once had before losing it to "racial, ethnic, and religious minorities; to women; to LGBTQ rights activists,"⁸² to liberal elites, etc. Trump encapsulated all of the Alt-Right views and promised to act on their rhetoric. Trump not only emboldened the Alt-Right by supporting their rhetoric, but he also helped their platform grow through his use of the internet.

Using the social media platform Twitter to spread his views, Trump became easily accessible to the Alt-Right movement. He was using the very same platform that the Alt-Right rose from in the first place. Since the Alt-Right movement existed on the internet, by Trump's constant and consistent use of new-age media to spread his rhetoric, he became one among the Alt-Right.

Due to the rise of hate crimes and violence over the last few years, the way internet providers view the Alt-Right has changed. The Charlottesville riots were the catalyst for the way the internet saw and dealt with the Alt-Right movement. YouTube began removing and banning all hate speech, Twitter has banned all Alt-Right accounts and hate speech, Facebook has implemented rules to ban hate speech, and many Alt-Right sites have been pushed from their previous platforms. After Charlottesville, any advocate or sympathizer of white nationalism and the Alt-Right has been forced to share their beliefs anonymously, if at all. Furthermore, due to the changing rules on the internet inhibiting anon hate speech, it has gotten drastically harder to voice Alt-Right rhetoric since the 2016 election.⁸³

Now the United States must figure out how to manage the rise of the Alt-Right on the internet without completely censoring them. There must be new policies in place by the government to minimize hate speech on the internet without infringing on free speech rights.

Social media sites must continue to monitor hate speech on their platforms without completely censoring Americans. Perhaps change will be on the horizon with a new Presidential administration in office.

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