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Centre for Languages and Literature

Lund University

Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology

**The portrayal of Sweden in American alt-right media,
as exemplified by Breitbart News**

Author: Viktor Andersson

Supervisor: Mattias Nowak

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Abstract

The alt-right is a fairly recent addition to the pantheon of political ideologies. Its rise to prominence is seen by many as the driving force behind Donald Trump's presidency. The youth of the ideology has also created a natural relationship between it and the fields of new media and cyberculture. In alt-right media, the topic of Sweden is frequently recurring, and the theme is most often of a nation heading for ruins.

This paper sets out to identify and analyse the arguments that alt-right media typically uses in their depiction of Sweden, and the underlying premises behind the arguments. To that end, the basic history and ideological framework of the alt-right is presented and examined. Breitbart News is then identified as an alt-right publication and a leading platform for alt-right thought. By using the Toulmin method of argument analysis, Breitbart's arguments in their articles about Sweden can be analysed.

The results show that Breitbart depicts Sweden as a country where immigration from non-European Islamic countries has led to a society rife with violent and sexual crime. Also, that the Swedish government and media are complicit in a cover-up to conceal the truth of migrant criminality from the Swedish people. Additionally, the results establish that Breitbart's arguments are fundamentally rooted in alt-right ideology.

Key words: alt-right, Breitbart News, Sweden, argument analysis, immigration

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Purpose	5
1.2 Framing the questions	6
1.3 Theoretical framework.....	6
1.4 Background.....	9
1.4.1 The alternative right.....	9
1.4.2 Breitbart.com	12
2. Disposition, material, and method	14
2.1 Disposition	14
2.2 Material	14
2.3 Argument analysis – methodological elaboration.....	15
3. Analysis.....	20
3.1 Argument 1: Immigration to Sweden has led to increased crime and the existence of no-go zones	21
3.2 Argument 2: The Swedish government and media are conspiring to keep the truth from the Swedish people.....	26
4. Discussion.....	29
5. Conclusion	31
5.1 Future research suggestions	32
Bibliography	33

1. Introduction

We've got to keep our country safe. You look at what's happening in Germany. You look at what's happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They're having problems like they never thought possible. You look at what's happening in Brussels. You look at what's happening all over the world. Take a look at Nice. Take a look at Paris.

- Donald Trump, 45th President of the United States of America

On the 18th February 2017, the newly elected President of the United States of America Donald Trump made an unclear reference to Sweden in the context of the recent terror attacks that took place in Brussels, Nice, Paris, and across Germany. The implication of his statement was interpreted by international media as such that Sweden had also suffered from an Islamist terror attack, much like France, Belgium, and Germany had experienced, and that this was the result of the mass migration of non-European origin. In Sweden, many were perplexed at the statement, as there had in fact not been a notable incident of any kind whatsoever recently, and certainly not during the night before. As expected, Trump was pressed for answers and clarification by the media, both domestic and international, as well as by the Swedish government. Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt even went so far as to writing “What has he been smoking?” on his Twitter page,¹ signifying the perceived absurdity of Trump’s remarks. Trump himself responded to the developing controversy on his own Twitter page, where he claimed to have gotten his information from a Fox News broadcast the night before.² In that broadcast, Fox News host Tucker Carlson interviewed filmmaker Ami Horowitz, who alleged that rampaging crime rates in Sweden can be directly associated with the influx of migrants in the country, and that Swedish authorities are covering up the fact.³ Horowitz’s claims are not unique, and Swedish journalist Martin Gelin, writing for *Dagens Nyheter*,

¹ Carl Bildt, “Sweden? Terror attack? What has he been smoking? Questions abound.” February 18, 2017 <https://twitter.com/carlbildt/status/833219648044855296?lang=en> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

² Sewell Chan, ‘Last Night in Sweden’? Trump’s Remark Baffles a Nation, New York Times, February 19, 2017 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/19/world/europe/last-night-in-sweden-trumps-remark-baffles-a-nation.html>

³ *What the US Could Learn from Sweden’s Refugee Crisis*, Fox News, February 17, 2017 <http://video.foxnews.com/v/5327830979001/#sp=show-clips> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

speculated in an essay that “[...] *Trump might as well have gotten his news from the countless right-wing media in the United States that have long been reporting that Sweden is heading for total collapse*”.⁴

Gelin highlights a real phenomenon within the field of American right-wing media, where the depiction of Sweden starkly contrasts the image of Sweden that the Swedish government has long propagated and taken for granted. The idea of Sweden has for the longest time been that of a remote and cold elongated country, dedicated to progressive values and humanitarian ideals, where social security is strong and people live long, healthy lives free of persecution and criminal abuse. This image of positivity has today been replaced, challenged by a new narrative of lawlessness and failed social engineering from a sphere within the conservative American right. The movement behind this new narrative has been dubbed ‘the alt-right’, short for ‘alternative right’. Its ideology, goals, and strategies defies conventional understanding of what traditionally constitutes the conservative right-wing. It is important to recognise the ramifications of the alt-right’s diverging narrative, as exemplified by an article written by economist Ulrika Sandhill for *Sveriges Television*.⁵ Sandhill cautions about the effect that a distorted and negative image of Sweden has, and connects the diminishing value of the Swedish currency to the “*danger of our waning brand image*”.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the argument behind articles from the American right-wing publication house Breitbart to find the underlying premise that they use to rationalise their depiction of Sweden. The actual contents of the articles are of lesser importance – what I endeavour to look for is the underlying premise, or what is implied by the articles as opposed to what they profess to say. The aim is, however, to illustrate the articulated messages and arguments as to show and analyse the underlying premises behind them. The latter is of main importance, but both dimensions are explored. The resulting paper will hopefully serve as a

⁴ Martin Gelin, *Martin Gelin: Sanningen Är Irrelevant När Trump Vill Skapa Oro*, Dagens Nyheter, February 19, 2017 - <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/martin-gelin-sanningen-ar-irrelevant-nar-trump-vill-skapa-oro/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁵ Ulrika Sandhill, “*Skyll inte bara på Ingves – Sverige bilden påverkar också kronans fall*”, SVT Nyheter, May 9, 2018 - <https://www.svt.se/opinion/skyll-inte-bara-pa-ingves-sverige-bilden-paverkar-ocksa-kronans-fall> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

useful resource on the American alt-right's view on Sweden, their rationale behind it, and the arguments they use to spread said view.

1.2 Framing the questions

Based on the presented aim, this paper aims to answer the following set of questions:

- How does the American alt-right, as exemplified by Breitbart between the years 2015-2018, portray Sweden in their articles?
- What are the primary arguments of Breitbart, and how do they present them?
- What are the underlying premises of the arguments?

Identifying Breitbart's arguments will allow me to answer the second question. I can then conduct an argument analysis, as detailed in the methodological section of this paper, which will hopefully answer the first question in a satisfying manner. The process of answering the first two questions will naturally answer the third.

1.3 Theoretical framework

In this section I will list and explain different theories and concepts that appear over the course of this paper. The purpose of this section is to clarify and heighten understanding of the material I have worked with, and of the paper itself.

- **Active audience theory**

Active audience theory posits that an audience is not simply a passive recipient of a message or an argument. Central to the theory is the idea that the meaning of a text is not merely dependent on the preferred reading of the person producing the text, it is also dependent on the interpretation of the text's reader. Readers of any given text does not represent a monolith, which in turn means that the meaning of a text is subject to the reader's gender, class, personal circumstance, and political affiliation. Active audience theory also includes the notion of selectivity; that audiences are selective in their choice of media, hence they are more likely to

be in agreement with the message of their media of choice for the simple reason that they have chosen to be a part of that media's audience.⁶

- **New media theory**

New media theory, according to the researcher Lev Manovich, is the study of new cultural objects as enabled by modern network communication technologies.⁷ Additionally, cultural objects and paradigms as enabled by all forms of computing that fall under the umbrella of new media theory. Manovich identifies “*the Internet, Web sites, computer multimedia, computer games, CDROMs and DVD, Virtual Reality, and computer-generated special effects*” as the chief components of new media.⁸ New media is simply put all forms of media that is made possible by modern digital technology, and the cultural products thereof are generally closely related to the concept of cyberculture.

- **Cyberculture**

Cyberculture, more colloquially known as Internet culture, is the concept of a culture that is cultivated by digital communities. Manovich describes cyberculture as “*various social phenomena associated with Internet and other new forms of network communication*”.⁹ In our digitalised Information Age, it is important to recognise the existence of online communities and the culture that permeates these communities.

- **Identitarianism**

Identitarianism is the ideology of the identitarians, which is a nationalist movement that originated in Europe in the 21st century.¹⁰ It is most commonly associated with the French New Right, where it gave rise to the term *Bloc Identitaire*. Identitarians believe that globalism and multiculturalism should be rejected on the grounds that every distinct people has the right to maintain their own ethnic and cultural identity free of alien influence. Identitarians believe that mass migration is akin to miscegenation on a national scale, and that foreign people,

⁶ Lang Mensilang, *Concept of Active Audience* - <https://www.scribd.com/doc/17052318/Concept-of-Active-Audience> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁷ Lev Manovich, *New Media from Borges to HTML*, 2003 - <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/manovich-new-media-intro.pdf> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁸ Lev Manovich, *New Media from Borges to HTML*, 2003

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Petra Vejvodová, *The Identitarian Movement – renewed idea of alternative Europe*, 2014 - <https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/ff2ea4db-2b74-4479-8175-7e7e468608ba.pdf> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

culture, and religions will rob a nation's people of their unique destiny.¹¹ The identitarian movement can therefore be considered to be closely related to racial nationalism, and its European origins has naturally ingrained in it a strong element of white nationalism.

- **White nationalism and white supremacy**

White nationalism promotes the idea that white identity should form the foundation of Western countries. White nationalists advocate for the implementation of policies and procedures meant to affect demographics in Western countries so that a white majority population can be ensured.¹² They commonly oppose non-white immigration, multiculturalism, and the mixing of ethnicities. White nationalism is closely interwoven with white supremacy: the idea that white people are inherently superior to non-whites. This is most clearly seen in white nationalists' claims that a 'white genocide' is taking place, and that cultural diversity leads to the systematic replacement of white people.¹³

- **Human biodiversity and scientific racism**

'Human biodiversity' ostensibly refers to scientifically proved genetic differences between human ethnicities. Adherents of this philosophy appropriate scientific and apolitical language to promote a narrative that various groups within the human race exhibit notable genetic differences such as lower IQ among Africans and a natural inclination towards inbreeding among Ashkenazi Jews.¹⁴ The philosophy of human biodiversity has been labelled as 'scientific racism' and pseudoscience by mainstream scientists. Scientists mainly criticise the human biodiversity adherents for the unproportioned focus they place on the nature aspect of genetic expression in the nature versus nurture debate. The modern field of genetics currently hold the theory of epigenetics, meaning the study of the environmental effect on gene expression, i.e. the middle ground between nature and nurture, as the scientific standard.¹⁵

¹¹ Kaitler Enless, *Understanding Identitarianism In A Time Of Identity Politics*, New Media Central - <http://newmediacentral.net/understanding-identitarianism-in-a-time-of-identity-politics/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

¹² Southern Poverty Law Center, *White Nationalist* - <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/white-nationalist> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ Ari Feldman, *Human Biodiversity: the Pseudoscientific Racism of the Alt-Right*, Forward.com, August 5, 2016 - <https://forward.com/opinion/national/346533/human-biodiversity-the-pseudoscientific-racism-of-the-alt-right/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

¹⁵ *ibid*

- **The establishment**

‘The establishment’ is a highly dynamic term. In the context of political discourse, it is applied to people or groups that are perceived to be in power. Political journalist Henry Fairly defined it as both “*the centers of ‘official power’*” and “*the whole matrix of official and social relations within which power is exercised*”.¹⁶ Anti-establishment rhetoric is typically employed by populist parties. ‘The establishment’ as such becomes a rhetorical tool of negative connotation, which can be applied to political opponents one wishes to define themselves against.

1.4 Background

This section of the paper will detail necessary background information such as the history and development of the alt-right movement, and the values espoused by their ideology. I will also detail the history and ideals of the Breitbart News Network, and their relationship to the alt-right movement.

1.4.1 The alternative right

The alternative right began to form during the latter part of the first decade of the 21st century, but it can only be said to have truly emerged in the public’s eye in 2015. This is when Donald Trump’s declaration of intention to run for President coincided with massive immigration to Europe from the Middle East and North Africa. Prior to this, the alt-right existed mostly on the Internet, where sites like 8chan’s and 4chan’s /pol/-boards¹⁷ served as incubators to the movement and its ideology. These websites mandates users to post and act anonymously, and the vast majority of the user base consequently consists of anonymous youths, which has translated into the alt-right movement at large. Other important Internet platforms for the alt-right includes more popular and mainstream websites such as Reddit and Twitter.¹⁸ The movement’s origins on Internet communities ties it strongly to the concept of cyberculture, and the use of online platforms to propagate the views of the movement brings the field of new media theory into the picture. New media theory calls attention to the fact that modern web

¹⁶ Jack Schafer, *What Is the ‘Establishment’ Now?*, Politico, January 26, 2016 - <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/01/what-is-the-establishment-now-213565> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

¹⁷4chan is an online anonymous imageboard with various sub-forums dedicated to various subjects. 8chan is an almost identical website. Both sites have so-called /pol/-boards, sub-forums that are dedicated to ‘politically incorrect’ discussion.

¹⁸ Southern Poverty Law Center, Alt-right - <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alt-right> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

sites typically tracks users for advertising purposes, which means that users generally have a unique identification tag. When Internet users are able to remain anonymous, either through the web site they use or by using disposable accounts on sites such as Reddit and Twitter, they are able to express themselves more intimately.¹⁹ Before 2015, adherents of the movement rarely met in real-life and when they did, it happened in secrecy for fear of being socially ostracised.²⁰

‘The alternative right’ as a term was first coined in 2008 by Richard Bertrand Spencer, a white nationalist who can be regarded as the chief ideologue of the alt-right.²¹ Spencer uses the term to describe an ideology that “*blends the ideas of neo-reactionaries [...] who advocate a return to an antiquated, pseudo-libertarian government that supports ‘traditional western civilization;’ ‘archeofuturists,’ those who advocate for a return to ‘traditional values’ without jettisoning the advances of society and technology; human biodiversity adherents [...] and ‘race realists,’ people who generally adhere to ‘scientific racism’*”.²² The core tenet of the alt-right is white nationalism; which they do not necessarily equate to white supremacy, but rather as the advocacy and preservation of white identity and culture in the face of rapidly changing demographics and multiculturalism. The other important tenets of alt-right ideology can be found in its opposition to mainstream conservatism, which they consider to have been compromised by globalism and adherence to political correctness, and the infusion of a form of Identitarianism that mixes ideals from the French *Bloc Identitaire* movement with traditionalist Christian values. This creates a unique white supremacist form of Christianity that concerns itself less with religion, and more with Christianity’s role in white European-American cultural history, and the values of ‘folk and family’.²³ Anti-Semitism also plays a considerable role within alt-right ideology, mostly in the form of conspiracy theories centred on a perceived Jewish agenda to subvert ethnically white societies through the promotion of cultural diversity, as well as criticism of American conservatives’ support of Israel.²⁴ Not all alt-right adherents are comfortable with anti-Semitism, however, as they consider many Jews

¹⁹ Encyclopedia of Communication Theory, *New Media Theory*, page 3 - https://edge.sagepub.com/system/files/77593_10.2ref.pdf [accessed on May 19, 2018]

²⁰ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Alt-right*

²¹ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Richard Bertrand Spencer* - <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/richard-bertrand-spencer-0> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

²² Southern Poverty Law Center, *Alt-right*

²³ Anti-Defamation League, *Alt Right: A Primer about the New White Supremacy* - <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/alt-right-a-primer-about-the-new-white-supremacy> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

²⁴ *ibid*

to also be ethnically white.²⁵ The alt-right has a distinct but convoluted relationship to identitarianism, as suggested by the division over Jews and white identity within the movement. The alt-right is considered by some, such as Southern Poverty Law Center, to be a direct successor of the identitarian movement.²⁶ However, identitarianism is a European product whereas the alt-right is an American product. While the two ideologies are considered to be European and American respectively, they can also be seen as two separate roots that are beginning to form a common stem. Before the alt-right emerged in its own right, it was considered to be representative of a form of American identitarianism. Similarly, today's European identitarian movement is being increasingly labelled as alt-right.²⁷ This suggests that the two movements are either beginning to merge in earnest, or that they are so similar that they will soon be regarded by on-lookers to be one and the same.

The alt-right's origin on the seedier parts of the Internet has instilled in it a great expertise when it comes to using social media to propagate its views, which is evident in its use of memes and hashtags.²⁸ These have become tools to proliferate alt-right ideas, and have sometimes even resulted in their inclusion into the political mainstream. A colourful example of this is the term 'cuckservative', which is a portmanteau of the words 'conservative' and 'cuckold'.²⁹ 'Cuckservative' was used as a meme by anonymous Twitter users among others, and the expression is meant to be scornful of Republicans and other conservative politicians whom they regard as traitors in their alleged support of globalism and progressive ideals. There is a strong racist undertone to the expression, as it implies that mainstream conservatives that are supportive of multiculturalism are akin to white men who allow black men to sleep with their wives. This is just one example out of many where the alt-right uses staples of Internet cultures such as memes to great effect in spreading their views virally under the guise of humour and sarcasm. Through a mixture of loosely organised campaigns and the viral nature of Internet memes, alt-right activists successfully attached the 'cuckservative' slur to Republican primary candidates in the presidential election with the notable exception of Donald Trump. This emphasises once again how cyberculture is an integral part of the alt-right, and also brings into perspective the role that an active audience plays in engaging with the material an agent

²⁵ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Alt-right*

²⁶ Southern Poverty Law Center, *White Nationalist*

²⁷ Josephine Huetlin, *Europe's 'Alt-Right' Back From the Dead With Fresh Young Face*, The Daily Beast, October 15, 2017 - <https://www.thedailybeast.com/europes-alt-right-takes-heart-as-austrias-vote-swings-its-way> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

²⁸ Anti-Defamation League, *Alt Right: A Primer about the New White Supremacy*

²⁹ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Alt-right*

produces. Anyone can attempt to attach a denigrating slur to somebody, but the successful spread and normalisation of usage of that slur requires an active audience to participate.

The relationship between Trump and the alt-right is complex. The alt-right has loudly lauded Trump's successes, and has worked hard to attach their label to Trump's campaign and subsequent presidency. Though Trump himself has never acknowledged the alt-right and their influence publically, his appointment of media executive Steve Bannon to the role of chief executive officer of his presidential bid, and later to the position of Chief Strategist in the Trump administration, created a tangible link between Trump and the alt-right.

1.4.2 Breitbart.com

Breitbart News Network was founded in 2007 by the American conservative commentator Andrew Breitbart with "*the aim of starting a site that would be unapologetically pro-freedom and pro-Israel*".³⁰ With an all-time high number of 15 million unique visitors in October 2017, Breitbart was for a considerable time one of the most important right-wing news platforms.³¹

After Andrew Breitbart died in 2012, Breitbart News came under board member Steve Bannon's management, who aligned Breitbart with the burgeoning American alt-right, as well as with the European populist right and various nationalist identitarian movements.³² In July 2016, Bannon boasted in an interview that Breitbart had become "*the platform for the alt-right*",³³ but he later had to distance himself from the ethno-nationalism that critics identified in the movement, and from allegations of racism and xenophobia.³⁴ Nevertheless, Breitbart continued to strongly support Trump in the presidential election, despite continued allegations of far-right extremism sympathies and its relation to the rapidly emerging alt-right ideology. The most notable inclusion of alt-right ideology in Breitbart's articles at this time was the savage opposition to establishment Republicans, mainstream media, the perceived political

³⁰ Larry Solov, *Breitbart News Network: Born In The USA, Conceived In Israel*, Breitbart News, November 17, 2015 - <http://www.breitbart.com/big-journalism/2015/11/17/breitbart-news-network-born-in-the-usa-conceived-in-israel/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

³¹ Jason Schwartz, *Breitbart's readership plunges*, Politico, March 20, 2018 - <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/03/20/breitbart-readership-plunge-steve-bannon-474801> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

³² Will Rahn, *Steve Bannon and the alt-right: a primer*, CBS News, August 19, 2016 - <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/steve-bannon-and-the-alt-right-a-primer/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

³³ Sarah Posner, *How Donald Trump's New Campaign Chief Created an Online Haven for White Nationalists*, Mother Jones, August 22, 2016 - <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/08/stephen-bannon-donald-trump-alt-right-breitbart-news/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

³⁴ Jeremy W. Peters, *Trump's Choice of Stephen Bannon Is Nod to Anti-Washington Base*, The New York Times, November 14, 2016 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/15/us/politics/stephen-bannon-white-house-trump.html>

elite classes of Washington, and even against Fox News³⁵ – something which is congruent with the alt-right’s grievances with more traditional conservatives. The closest link between Breitbart and the alt-right is found in the site’s former tech editor, Milo Yiannopolous. Yiannopolous, who was hired in October 2015, served as an intermediary between Breitbart and leading figures within the alt-right, whose message he implemented in Breitbart articles. He is known to have socialised amicably with Richard Spencer, and to have solicited advice from other leading alt-right figures.³⁶ Under Bannon and Yiannopolous, Breitbart began portraying the alt-right in an increasingly favourable light, and an expose published by BuzzFeed in October 2017 details the various ways that Yiannopolous whitewashed the image of the alt-right.³⁷ One of the clearest example of this can found in an article, *An Establishment Conservative’s Guide To The Alt-Right*, that Yiannopolous wrote and published on Breitbart in March 2016.³⁸ In this article, Yiannopolous writes: “*The alternative right, more commonly known as the alt-right, is an amorphous movement. Some — mostly Establishment types — insist it’s little more than a vehicle for the worst dregs of human society: anti-Semites, white supremacists, and other members of the Stormfront set. They’re wrong.*”. A good part of this ‘guide’ is also dedicated to praising Donald Trump, who is described as “*perhaps the first truly cultural candidate for President since Buchanan*”.

Bannon temporarily left Breitbart in August 2016 to join Trump’s presidential campaign as its chief executive officer,³⁹ something his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton remarked on by saying: “*The de facto merger between Breitbart and the Trump campaign represents a landmark achievement for the alt-right*”.⁴⁰ After Trump’s election to president was successful, Bannon went on to join his administration as Chief Strategist.⁴¹ He was joined in January 2017

³⁵ Lloyd Grove, *How Breitbart Unleashes Hate Mobs to Threaten, Dox, and Troll Trump Critics*, The Daily Beast, March 1, 2016 - <https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-breitbart-unleashes-hate-mobs-to-threaten-dox-and-troll-trump-critics> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

³⁶ Joseph Bernstein, *Here's How Breitbart And Milo Smuggled Nazi and White Nationalist Ideas Into The Mainstream*, BuzzFeed, October 5, 2017 - https://www.buzzfeed.com/josephbernstein/heres-how-breitbart-and-milo-smuggled-white-nationalism?utm_term=.kopZJV4gz#.leM41PnOM [accessed on May 19, 2018]

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ Allum Bokhari, Milo Yiannopolous, *An Establishment Conservative’s Guide To The Alt-Right*, Breitbart News, March 29, 2016 - <http://www.breitbart.com/tech/2016/03/29/an-establishment-conservatives-guide-to-the-alt-right/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

³⁹ Brian Stelter, *Steve Bannon: The 'street fighter' who's now running Trump's campaign*, CNN Money, August 17, 2016 - <http://money.cnn.com/2016/08/17/media/steve-bannon-breitbart-donald-trump/index.html> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁴⁰ Matt Flegenheimer, *Hillary Clinton Says 'Radical Fringe' Is Taking Over G.O.P. Under Donald Trump*, The New York Times, August 25, 2016 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/26/us/politics/hillary-clinton-speech.html> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁴¹ Christopher Caldwell, *What Does Steve Bannon Want?*, The New York Times, February 25, 2017 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/25/opinion/what-does-steve-bannon-want.html> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

by another Breitbart editor, Julia Hahn, who was appointed as Special Assistant to Trump directly.⁴² With two key Breitbart figures in the presidential administration, the link between the alt-right, Breitbart, and Donald Trump was at this point stronger than ever. However, Bannon was ejected from his position in August 2017, upon which he returned to his previous position at Breitbart.⁴³

2. Disposition, material, and method

2.1 Disposition

The core of this paper consists of an analytical section where I identify the two primary arguments that can be found in Breitbart's articles. Each argument has a dedicated sub-section where I go into great detail to describe each argument. To this end, I will use a great deal of quotes and examples from the articles to show what I consider to be the most important parts of Breitbart's argumentation. I will also make some references to terms, theories, and concepts that I have previously outlined in the theoretical framework in the introductory chapter. My analysis will also include a significant focus on how Breitbart's arguments can be related to alt-right ideology. The analytical section is followed by a brief discussion, in which I reiterate my results from the analysis. I will also briefly discuss my success with using my method in this section. The final part of the paper is a short conclusion, in which I summarise my findings and give suggestions on future research related to my subject.

2.2 Material

Since the purpose of this paper is to explore how the American alt-right movement portrays Sweden in international media by analysing the arguments that they employ, I have chosen to use articles published by Breitbart as my primary source material. I chose to use Breitbart's articles since I strongly consider them to be representative of the alt-right at large. Steve

⁴² Robert Costa, *Trump's latest hire alarms allies of Ryan — and bolsters Bannon*, Washington Post, January 23, 2017 - https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-latest-hire-alarms-allies-of-ryan--and-bolsters-bannon/2017/01/23/2c4b94fa-e18e-11e6-ba11-63c4b4fb5a63_story.html?utm_term=.4be6e8496c20 [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁴³ Julia Carrie Wong, *Steve Bannon returns to Breitbart: 'I've got my hands back on my weapons'*, The Guardian, August 19, 2017 - <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/18/steve-bannon-returns-breitbart-donald-trump> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

Bannon's statement that Breitbart had become "*the platform for the alt-right*" is my primary motivator, and I consider the clearly visible links between Donald Trump, Breitbart, and the alt-right to support my decision. The remarkably high readership that Breitbart enjoyed up to a point also played a role in my choice. By sorting articles according to tags placed on them by Breitbart staff, I was able to find every article that Breitbart has ever published about Sweden. I could then sift through articles to find those that I considered to contain suitable arguments to analyse. I also decided to only use articles published between the summer of 2015 and 2017. The reason for this is because I wanted to frame my paper in between the summer in which Trump declared his intention to run for president along with Bannon's first real affiliation with Trump, and the year in which Trump made his controversial remarks on Sweden and Bannon's departure from the administration occurred. Only one article was exempted from this criterion, as it was published in 2018. I decided to include that article in my analysis as it was helpful, and its inclusion did not noticeably disrupt the analysis.

2.3 Argument analysis – methodological elaboration

The material from which I have based my knowledge on argument analysis is *Textens Mening och Makt* (2012) by Göran Bergström and Kristina Boréus, *Arguing on the Toulmin Model* (2006) by David Hitchcock and Bart Verheij, and *Argumentation - Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation* (2002) by Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and A. Francisca Snoeck Henkemans.

We are all targeted by some manner of argument in our lives. The advertisement that you see on television is attempting to convince you why you need to buy the advertiser's product. The university is trying to ingrain ideas in the student through teaching, making the ideas established knowledge. A political party is always working to convince you to vote for them by arguing for their own beliefs. Even religions can be said to employ arguments to attract believers, much like the political party with its prospective voters. In our globalised age of information technology mass media has, more so than ever, become a venue for ideological persuasion, which is evident in the modern phenomenon of so-called 'alternative facts' and the established mass media's attempt to curb the spread of.⁴⁴ The history of argument can be traced

⁴⁴ Christian Ploog, *Rasism, hat och fejk – Nyheter24 granskar falska nyheter på nätet.*, Nyheter24, December 12, 2016 - <https://nyheter24.se/natets-morka-sida/869728-nyheter24-granskar-falska-nyheter-pa-natet> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

all the way back to antiquity, where the ancient Greeks and Romans developed the school of rhetoric, and it continued to be a staple of Western teaching up until the 19th century as a compulsory subject in school.⁴⁵ Rhetoric, as a separate school of thought, mainly treats the efficacy of communication and the way people will try to convince one another through written and verbal means. Within rhetoric, one can identify three main tenets; logos, ethos, and pathos. Logos is the appeal to the recipient's intellectual and rational capacity to draw conclusions. Ethos is the establishment of the moral character that the speaker ascribes to itself, and can be described as an appeal to authority. Pathos is the appeal to emotion, in which the speaker plays on the personal feelings and affections of the listener. Texts that are written with logos as the argument's foundation are typically factual, and are marked by abstention from virtue-loaded expressions and appeal to emotion. Ethos-based arguments will try to convince the recipient of the speaker's moral authority and credibility within the particular field that the argument exists. Finally, pathos-based arguments are essentially the opposite of logos-based ones, in that they make heavy use of the appeal to emotion and virtue to convince the recipient of accepting the argument.⁴⁶ In terms of contemporary argument analysis, logos is the prevailing tenet due to the natural relation between the concept of logos and the human being's innate desire to consider itself rational. This adherence to logos in argument analysis stems from the tradition within Western philosophy to relate the concept of logos to formal logic.⁴⁷ In analysing the argument of a text, the conductor of the analysis uses formal logic to break down the argument into its constituent parts to create models and definitions concerning the logical component to the argument. While the focus on logos in argument analysis comes at the cost of the ethos- and pathos component on a superficial level, it also creates a natural opportunity for the inclusion of ethos and pathos in the otherwise logos-oriented analysis. In analysing what the argument actually says in its attempts to convince, it makes it possible to create a comparison to a scenario where said argument exclusively appeals to reason. Searching for places in a text where logos is present exposes the instances where it is not. This simple experiment invariably proves that no real-world argument is entirely devoid of ethos and pathos, since an argument by its nature is an interpersonal activity.⁴⁸

An argument analysis has at least three main purposes; descriptive, prescriptive, and the burden of evidence. The descriptive dimension concerns the origin of the argument in the text, and

⁴⁵ Göran Bergström, Kristina Boréus, *Textens Mening och Makt*, Studentlitteratur, 2017, p. 92

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p. 92

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 92

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 92

requires reconstructing the argument from the standpoint of the person making the argument. The idea behind this reasons that an argument does not come into existence in a vacuum; it is rather a constituent of a larger text that does not merely concern itself with a basic for-and-against reasoning revolving around preconceived perceptions.⁴⁹ The prescriptive dimension of the analysis seeks to evaluate the ability of the argument to adhere to norms regarding interpersonal communication in general. This is to say, an argument must not be fallacious or misleading, and it must be open to questioning and a subsequent defence of the argument by the party behind it.⁵⁰ The third dimension, which is that of the burden of evidence, is fairly straightforward. If you are to argue for something, you must also be able to prove it through empirical evidence.⁵¹ Attempting to argue that the ancient Egyptians were aided by extra-terrestrials in building the pyramids might survive contact with the descriptive dimension of an argument analysis, but the vast majority of people will find the idea just plainly ridiculous and therefore it cannot be considered to pass the criteria of the prescriptive dimension. Regardless of what the prescriptive dimension of the analysis yields in this factitious case, there simply is far more evidence from archaeologists and historians that the ancient Egyptians possessed the means and knowledge to construct pyramids themselves, without outside influences of any kind.

Argument analysis occurs in many forms, the two most important of which are the pro et contra form and the Toulmin model. *Pro et contra* is Latin, and means ‘for and against’, which has been popularized in Modern English as the recognizable expression ‘pro and con’. The pro et contra method is accomplished by thoroughly reading a text, and extracting from it arguments that are for and against the writer’s thesis. These pros and cons are then arranged in a table or some other form of categorization method where they are given designations according to their role and sequence in the text. The first argument that is pro to the thesis is assigned as P1 (Pro 1), and the first counterargument is assigned as C1 (Contra 1). Each pro- and con-argument can also have subordinated arguments for and against it, and these are also labelled as such. For example, the first pro-argument to the first counterargument is labelled as C1P1, while the first pro-argument you find can have a secondary counterargument which in turn is entirely capable of possessing a pro-argument of its own. The resulting designation for this series of pro and cons is then written as P1C2P1. The result of a properly conducted pro et contra

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 93

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 93

⁵¹ *ibid*, p. 93

argument analysis is a thorough dissemination of a text's arguments, with each argument then broken down into subordinate arguments for and against. This method also produces a visual indicator in the form of a table or grid which shows each argument as it appears in the text, with the subordinate arguments and their relation to the parent argument easily visible.

While the pro et contra venue of analysis is undoubtedly useful, I felt like it would be better suited to my needs if I was to analyse a single text. As things stand, my selection of articles to work with eventually numbered sixteen, thus I needed a more flexible method that was better suited to analyse several different articles with a unifying argument behind, linking them together. More importantly, I needed a method that was better suited to discuss implicit messages behind arguments. The Toulmin model does not differ greatly from the pro et contra method, but it does have some particular characteristics that made me choose it over the pro et contra method.

Stephen Toulmin introduced his model in *The Uses of Argument* (1958), where he argued that “the abstract and formal criteria of mathematical logic and of much twentieth-century epistemology had little applicability to the methods we actually use in everyday life to assess arguments”.⁵² This is to say; a purely logical and methodological approach to appraising an argument does not faithfully correspond to the way that we, as humans, actually approach arguments in our daily lives. Oftentimes, the implicit message behind the argument reveals more about the speaker's actual message to the receiver than the argument itself. Where the traditional logical approach to argument analysis breaks arguments down into premises and conclusions, the Toulmin model offers a more organic and flexible method, as will be described hereafter. When I assert something, I make a *claim* (C).⁵³ I will then be challenged to defend my claim against a questioner who asks, “What have you got to go on?” upon which I present the facts that are relevant to my claim. These facts are my *data* (D).⁵⁴ These facts, my data, and their factuality and relevancy to the claim is then open to challenge in turn when the questioner asks, “How do you get there?”. I can then respond that my (D) allows me to draw conclusions or make claims such as (C). Toulmin calls this a *warrant* (W),⁵⁵ which is something that I can also add a *qualifier* (Q)⁵⁶ to, such as ‘necessarily’, ‘probably’, or ‘presumably’. If my (Q) is not definite, meaning that my warrant is not stronger than

⁵² David Hitchcock, Bart Verheij, *Arguing on the Toulmin Model*, Dordrecht, 2006, p. 1

⁵³ *ibid*, p. 2

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p. 2

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p. 2

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 2

‘presumably’, I also have to add conditions for a *rebuttal* (R)⁵⁷ to indicate the conditions where the authority of my warrant can be set aside. The questioner can also question the acceptability of the warrant in general by asking: “Why do you think that?”. My answer to this question is the *backing* (B), where I back up my argument by saying “On account of (B)...”.⁵⁸ This is the space where I support my warrant. Included below is a figure that clearly shows the structure of the Toulmin model.

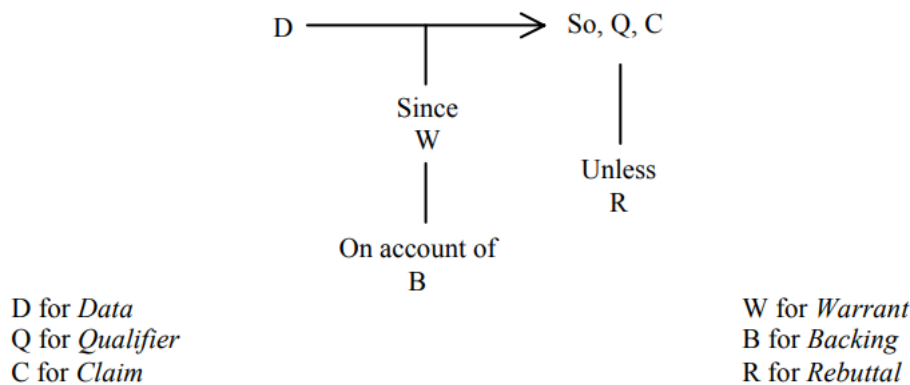


Figure 1: Toulmin model example (Hitchcock and Verheij 2006, 2)

This figure accurately shows the typical variant of a Toulmin model, but it is important to note that (R) and (Q) are not always required inclusions and may be omitted from the model should they not exist in the argument, and it is even more important to emphasise that the specific terms used here are not used in all translations and interpretations of Toulmin’s work. The basis of the Toulmin model is the *claim*, the *data*, and the *warrant* which is why my analysis will be centred on them. The greatest difference between the pro et contra method and the Toulmin model, for they are quite similar otherwise in their logical approach to arguments, lies in the Toulmin model’s ability to more readily assess the implied message behind the argument through challenging the warrant. For the purposes of my bachelor’s thesis, the ability to assess these implications is of greater value than the purely logical approach of the pro et contra method. Assessing the implication of the warrant can be risky, in that it requires independent interpretation on the analyst’s part, resulting sometimes in precarious interpretations. Nevertheless, there is always an implication on some level in any written text, and argumentative texts are no exception. The implication is a piece of unsaid or unwritten background information that is tangential to the argument, and is mutually understood by both

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 2

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 2

the speaker and the receiver. The implication can be unsaid because both parties in the conversation perceive it as obvious and unnecessary to emphasise. However, the speaker might leave the implication unsaid specifically to influence the receiver to regard the implication as obvious. Equally, the speaker may refrain from voicing the implication in order to be able to avoid to completely stand behind an idea, should the idea be perceived as controversial by the public in general.⁵⁹ In the analytical section of my paper, the implication of an argument will generally be referred to by me as ‘the premise’.

3. Analysis

This section of the paper is dedicated to my analysis of Breitbart’s articles. I have identified two different primary arguments, although they are symbiotic with each other. Before the analysis of these arguments begin, I have included a shorter example where I show how I perform the analysis. This example is as follows: in the article *Sweden Top Cop on No Go Zones: Europe’s Open Borders ‘Has Brought Crime Here’*,⁶⁰ a retired police officer hailing from Malmö describes his experiences with crime in the city. He links the increased crime rates and the growing prevalence of no-go zones to the opening of Sweden’s borders, and he directly attributes this to Sweden’s membership in the European Union and the Schengen treaty. By using the Toulmin model of argument analysis, the argument in the article can be separated from the text to be analysed on its own. The claim in the argument is that increased immigration to Sweden has led to massively increased crime rates. The data upon which the writer bases this claim is an interview with the retired police officer and his statement that foreign-born Swedes commit the majority of crimes: “*Of the number of people arrested [...] the majority are of foreign origin [...] There is an over-representation of violent crimes committed by people from other countries*”. The warrant for the claim and the data is the retired police officer’s background as a “former INTERPOL officer and director of Swedish criminal intelligence division”, and his own experiences in that capacity with crime. Breitbart’s premise for this argument is that unhindered movement across borders inevitably leads to increased crime.

⁵⁹ Göran Bergström, Kristina Boréus, *Textens Mening och Makt*, Studentlitteratur, 2017, p. 116

⁶⁰ Oliver JJ Lane, *Sweden Top Cop on No Go Zones: Europe’s Open Borders ‘Has Brought Crime Here’*, Breitbart News, February 23, 2017 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/02/23/sweden-top-cop-europes-open-borders-brought-crime/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

3.1 Argument 1: Immigration to Sweden has led to increased crime and the existence of no-go zones

The first argument that I will analyse is also the most prevalent argument in Breitbart's articles about Sweden; that of rampant criminality in conjunction with areas of lawlessness in Sweden as a result of mass migration. The claim in this argument is that immigration to Sweden from non-European and predominantly Muslim countries has resulted in greatly increased crime and a developing trend of so-called 'no-go zones'. The Breitbart articles place a great emphasis on the perpetrators' status as migrants or asylum seekers, and the crimes that are described are always of a violent or a sexual nature, and often both. The link that Breitbart establishes between immigration and crime is evident when they write: "*As 190,000 migrants this year alone pour into the country, law and order is beginning to break down as the country plays witness to numerous arson attacks, stabbings and gang rapes*".⁶¹ The premise for this argument seems to be that migrants are inherently prone to committing criminal acts due to two reasons. Firstly, the existence of ghettos and enclaves comprised almost entirely of non-ethnic Swedes, about which Breitbart writes: "*Sweden is rapidly becoming a fragmented nation, at war with itself. Almost 26.8 per cent of the population is now foreign born or has at least one foreign born parent. With no way to assimilate such large numbers, the outcome has been the creation of ghettos in which crime and extremism are allowed to flourish*".⁶² Secondly, the countries from which many of the migrants originate from are considered by Breitbart to be possessive of an inherently misogynistic culture that enables sexual crime. In the article *Europe's Rape Epidemic: Western Women Will Be Sacrificed At The Altar Of Mass Migration*, the writer singles out countries such as Pakistan, Somalia, and Afghanistan, and writes: "*women are abused everywhere, but in most countries it's against the law. In Islamic states, it is the law*".⁶³ These two quotes affirm the aforementioned premise upon which Breitbart bases its argument that migrants in Sweden commit crime, and although these quotes are drawn from just two articles, the sentiment is echoed in each and every one to some degree. The data that Breitbart bases its argument on varies from article to article. In spite of this, I find the common denominator to be that their data is derived from singular cases that Swedish media

⁶¹ Donna Rachel Edmunds, *Sweden 'Facing Collapse' Thanks To Migrant Influx, Foreign Minister Warns*, Breitbart News, October 31, 2015 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/10/31/sweden-facing-collapse-thanks-migrant-influx-foreign-minister-warns/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁶² *ibid*

⁶³ Anne-Marie Waters, *Europe's Rape Epidemic: Western Women Will Be Sacrificed At The Altar Of Mass Migration*, Breitbart News, October 6, 2015 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/10/06/europes-rape-epidemic-western-women-will-be-sacrificed-at-the-altar-of-mass-migration/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

has first reported on. These sources are represented both by mainstream media such as *Aftonbladet*,⁶⁴ *Dagens Nyheter*,⁶⁵ and *Expressen*,⁶⁶ and less mainstream alternatives such as *Fria Tider*.⁶⁷ These cases are invariably of a violent or a sexual nature, where rapes and sexual assaults committed by migrants are described in detail. The three articles *Sweden: Asylum Seeker Forced 10-Year-Old to Watch Porn Before Raping Her*,⁶⁸ *Migrants Jailed After Woman Abducted At Gunpoint, Gang-Raped In Hookah Bar Basement*,⁶⁹ and *Afghan Migrants Brutally Rape Underage Boy and Film the Attack*⁷⁰ are good examples of cases that Breitbart chooses to highlight. The events that these three articles describe are both brutal and callous in nature, and the perpetrators' identities as migrants are front and centre. These cases are even described specifically as “migrant rape cases”, and in writing “Sexual assaults by migrants in Sweden have been an issue in many cities over the last year”⁷¹ Breitbart makes it clear that they want to depict Sweden as having a tangible issue with migrant sex crimes.

Other articles focus more on the phenomenon of no-go zones, in which Breitbart depicts a rapidly segregating society where the rule of law retreats in the face of migrant-majority communities. Two typical examples of this are found in the articles *Police Punched, Kicked While on Routine Patrol in Migrant-Dominated Suburb*⁷² and *Swedish Journalist Shot in No-Go Zone*.⁷³ In these two articles, Breitbart argues that staples of an open and liberal society such as functioning law enforcement and free journalism are threatened by immigration.

⁶⁴ Chris Tomlinson, *Sweden: Asylum Seeker Forced 10-Year-Old to Watch Porn Before Raping Her*, Breitbart News, March 22, 2017 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/03/22/sweden-asylum-seeker-forced-10-year-old-watch-porn-raping/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁶⁵ Chris Tomlinson, *Left Wing Swedish Newspaper Journalist Attacked in 'No Go Zone'*, Breitbart News, February 21, 2017 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/02/21/swedish-newspaper-photographer-attacked-no-go-zone/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁶⁶ Oliver JJ Lane, *Migrants Jailed After Woman Abducted At Gunpoint, Gang-Raped In Hookah Bar Basement*, Breitbart News, January 14, 2017 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/01/14/migrants-jailed-woman-abducted-gunpoint-gang-raped-hookah-bar/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁶⁷ *ibid*

⁶⁸ Chris Tomlinson, *Sweden: Asylum Seeker Forced 10-Year-Old to Watch Porn Before Raping Her*, Breitbart News, March 22, 2017

⁶⁹ Oliver JJ Lane, *Migrants Jailed After Woman Abducted At Gunpoint, Gang-Raped In Hookah Bar Basement*, Breitbart News, January 14, 2017

⁷⁰ Chris Tomlinson, *Afghan Migrants Brutally Rape Underage Boy and Film the Attack*, Breitbart News, December 7, 2016 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2016/12/07/afghan-migrants-brutally-rape-boy-film-ordeal/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁷¹ Chris Tomlinson, *Sweden: Asylum Seeker Forced 10-Year-Old to Watch Porn Before Raping Her*, Breitbart News, March 22, 2017

⁷² Virginia Hale, *Police Punched, Kicked While on Routine Patrol in Migrant-Dominated Suburb*, Breitbart News, February 13, 2017 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/02/13/police-punched-patrol-migrant-suburb/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁷³ Chris Tomlinson, *Swedish Journalist Shot in No-Go Zone*, Breitbart News, September 21, 2017 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/09/21/former-swedish-state-broadcaster-journalist-shot-no-go-zone/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

Central to their argument is the tendency of migrants to cluster into ethnic enclaves, which in the case of Sweden translates into Islamic no-go zones where police and journalists cannot freely enter without being harassed by migrant gangs. In a third article on the phenomenon of no-go zones, *Nearly Half of Residents in Swedish No Go Zones Feel Unsafe Outdoors After Dark*,⁷⁴ Breitbart argues that the population of these areas live in fear of gangs and criminals. Of special significance in Breitbart's argument here is the feeling of insecurity that women experience in these areas, and how they cannot move freely at night out of fear for sexual assault and harassment. The premise of Breitbart's argument regarding no-go zones is based on a dichotomy in which immigration is diametrically opposed by law and order, as they consider the no-go zones to be a natural but undesirable result of immigration. In following this dichotomy, Breitbart depicts a society that is divided between migrants adhering to non-Western, anti-feminist, and Islamic values – where the de facto leadership of the community unofficially consists of criminal gangs and religious extremists – on one hand. On the other hand is the ethnically Swedish society that adheres to secular and democratic Western values. Breitbart considers the Swedish side to be victimised by the migrant side, the latter of which operates with impunity out of a lack of fear of repercussions from the Swedish establishment.

In establishing and characterising a divide between two different social groups, Breitbart engages in othering. Othering is defined by John A. Powell and Stephen Menendian as a “*set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities*”.⁷⁵ Breitbart's use of othering is a critical component to their argument, since they seek to spread the idea that Swedish society is fragmented into different groups that inevitably experience conflict and tension between each other. The process of othering is also a natural part of the alt-right ideological framework, owing to the link between the alt-right and its progenitor in identitarianism.

A recurring element in Breitbart's argument concerning migrant criminals is the inability of the Swedish judiciary system to deport migrant criminals. In the hookah bar basement rape article, the writer begins the article by introducing the perpetrators as “*two so-called 'stateless*

⁷⁴ Chris Tomlinson, *Nearly Half of Residents in Swedish No Go Zones Feel Unsafe Outdoors After Dark*, Breitbart News, March 17, 2018 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2018/03/17/nearly-half-residents-swedish-no-go-zones-feel-unsafe-dark/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁷⁵ John A. Powell, Stephen Menendian, *The Problem of Othering: Towards Inclusiveness and Belonging*, Othering&Belonging.org - <http://www.otheringandbelonging.org/the-problem-of-othering/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

refugees’ — so identified because they arrived in Sweden without identification papers and consequently can’t be deported”.⁷⁶ A follow-up article on the Afghani underage boy rape is titled *Afghan Migrants Who Brutally Raped Teenage Boy Will Not Be Deported*,⁷⁷ and the entire content of this article revolves around the court’s decision to not deport the five perpetrators despite being found guilty. The writer begins the article by saying “*the rapists cannot be deported because their homeland is ‘too dangerous’*”, which is then followed up by focusing on the short length of their sentence: “*The defendants would have received much longer sentences – up to six years – but due to their age and the fact they cannot be paroled, their jail terms were drastically reduced*”. I interpret this part of the argument as a criticism of Sweden and their lax treatment of criminals, and by linking back to the *Europe’s Rape Epidemic: Western Women Will Be Sacrificed At The Altar Of Mass Migration* article, a pattern begins to emerge in Breitbart’s argument. This pattern is absolutely central to understanding the core of Breitbart’s argument and what it is that they imply when they write about Sweden. The writer in this article is prone to especially caustic remarks on Sweden and Europe such as the following;

“Our leaders are now allowing men from violent misogynistic cultures, where women are stoned to death for being raped, to come to Europe in massive numbers. They’re allowing known rapists to mingle freely with European women. They know what this will mean for our safety, but they do it anyway.”

“Following the brutal rape of a dying woman in Stockholm, the prosecution did not attempt to deport the rapist and claimed that this Somali citizen could not be removed because he would present a danger to the women of his home country. It mattered not a jot the danger he presented to Swedish women, because in the new Europe, Europeans matter far less than migrants.”

The concept of an anti-white leftist agenda is thematic of alt-right ideology, and the writer of this article makes it abundantly clear what she believes motivates leaders of Western nations when she writes “*This is all part of a broad-ranging, virulent, and vicious hatred of the West, and of Western people (especially white Western people)*”. The writer is equally clear in her belief that leftism is the ideological catalyst behind the dichotomy of disorderly migrant communities versus victimised white Swedes: “*the Left rejects [...] the freedom [...] that nation-state democracy inevitably constructs, and sadly the Left is now calling the shots*”. This particular article and its writer embodies the premise of Breitbart’s argument; non-European immigration leads to more violent and sexual crimes because migrants are inherently prone to

⁷⁶ Oliver JJ Lane, *Migrants Jailed After Woman Abducted At Gunpoint, Gang-Raped In Hookah Bar Basement*, Breitbart News, January 14, 2017

⁷⁷ Nick Hallett, *Afghan Migrants Who Brutally Raped Teenage Boy Will Not Be Deported*, Breitbart News, December 31, 2016 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2016/12/31/afghan-migrants-brutally-raped-teenage-boy-will-not-deported/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

committing such crimes due to the culture they hail from. Furthermore, Western leaders would rather ‘sacrifice’ their European citizens than stymie immigration because they are ideologically motivated to consider white Europeans of lesser value than the migrants. The sentiment of this article is reciprocated in another article, this one by a different writer, but the similarities are striking. In “*Swedish Prof: Hot Weather, Not Rapey Migrants Driving Sweden’s Place As The Rape Capital Of The World*”,⁷⁸ a quote such as the following can be found:

“Although more well-known for ABBA, Ikea and Avicii, today Sweden’s international image is being tarnished by a much darker reputation: as the rape capital of the Western world. The irresponsible policies of Sweden’s leaders have caused years of suffering for Swedish women. By opening the gates to massive immigration from Africa and the Middle East, Swedish politicians have brought cultures and values in strict opposition to ours. Immigrants raised in societies without respect for women, who see women as possessions whose main purpose in life is to please their husband, have no place in our liberal society. Many male immigrants, when faced with our liberal lifestyle and beautiful women, are unable to control themselves.”

The content of this quote is almost identical in meaning to the two preceding quotes. It places the blame of the rapes that occur at the hands of migrants in the hands of Swedish leaders and politicians, and Breitbart seems to espouse a feeling that Swedish politicians have sold-out their own people. It once again establishes a dichotomy between a liberal and tolerant Western culture on one side and an oppressive and intolerant Islamic culture on the other. The propensity of migrants from Islamic cultures to commit sexual crimes is also reiterated. This article also repeats Breitbart’s argument that migrant criminals are given softer sentences on account of their cultural baggage. There is also the belief in an ideologically motivated disregard for European victims of crime, as is evident when the writer claims that “*Our socialistic justice system then rewards them for their lack of control by caring more about the well-being and integrity of criminals than it does about the victims*”. The writer’s assertion that male immigrants, when introduced to “*our [...] beautiful women*”, are unable to control themselves also introduces an element of human biodiversity thought into the argument. Male immigrants are connotated with an animalistic characteristic in their inability to control their lust. This is also yet another example of othering, in that it reduces male immigrants to something lesser.

Because the data that Breitbart bases its argument on agrees with their claim that Sweden’s substantial immigration is intrinsically linked to migrant criminality and migrant-dominated no-go zones, it must be conceded that they have a legible warrant for their argument. This warrant in turn finds its backing in the myriad of stories regarding migrant criminality and the

⁷⁸ Tobias Andersson, *Swedish Prof: Hot Weather, Not Rapey Migrants Driving Sweden’s Place As The Rape Capital Of The World*, Breitbart News, August 11, 2016 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2016/08/11/swedish-prof-hot-weather-not-rapey-migrants-driving-swedens-place-as-the-rape-capital-of-the-world/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

situation in the no-go zones that Breitbart writes about. It can therefore be said that whenever Breitbart writes about Sweden in conjunction with migrant criminality, the underlying premise is that the Swedish population is suffering at the hands of the Swedish establishment to the benefit of migrants.

3.2 Argument 2: The Swedish government and media are conspiring to keep the truth from the Swedish people

The second argument that I will analyse concerns an alleged cover-up on the part of the Swedish government, something that Swedish media is complicit in according to Breitbart. The claim in Breitbart's argument here is based on the premise that the Swedish people is kept in the dark about the relationship between immigration and the rising crime rates by the government. The Breitbart articles, in which I find the occurrence of this argument, mostly focuses on the refusal of the Swedish government to conduct updated studies on the ethnicity and nation of origin of criminals. This argument is less prevalent compared to the earlier argument concerning the relationship between immigration and the rising crime rates and no-go zones, but it is visible nonetheless. An example of this is found in the article *Sweden Blocks Request for Data on Link Between Crime and Immigration*,⁷⁹ in which the attempts of opposition parties to start new investigations into the relationship between immigration and crime, and the steadfast refusal of the left-wing government to comply with the request, is described. Justice Minister Morgan Johansson is singled out by Breitbart when they write "*Morgan Johansson denied the need for updated statistics on immigration and crime because it would be unlikely to herald any new information*", his reasoning being that "*Minority groups are often overrepresented in crime statistics, but when controlling for socioeconomic factors this [...] disappears almost entirely*". Breitbart rejects Johansson's reasoning as they counter his statement by immediately quoting within the article Swedish economist Tino Sanandaji, who says: "*It is illogical to deny the criminality of migrants with the argument that criminal migrants are poor*".

⁷⁹ Virginia Hale, *Sweden Blocks Request for Data on Link Between Crime and Immigration*, Breitbart News, January 18, 2017 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/01/18/sweden-blocks-data-crime-immigration/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

A second article, *Claim: Researchers Covering Up Relationship Between Immigration and Crime*,⁸⁰ is more direct in signalling the premise that a deliberate state-mandated cover-up is occurring. Here, Breitbart leans on the authority of the independent⁸¹ Norwegian political scientist Karl-Eirik Kval to assert that Swedish researchers working in an official capacity are knowingly obscuring facts. Referencing Kval, Breitbart writes that “*Sweden’s criminology establishment obscures the facts around migrant criminality*”, and that there is a “*‘denial and cloaking culture’ engaged in by researchers in Sweden*”. Because these researchers are employed by governmental research institutes, the Swedish government itself is implicated in the cover-up. Breitbart, again referencing Kval, also states that the Swedish researchers and criminologists cannot be trusted as they draw their conclusions because they refuse to disclose the data that they work with. The official line of reasoning, that socioeconomic factors control the relationship between crime and ethnicity, is also challenged by Breitbart as they point out that immigration is the leading cause behind poverty in Sweden. Breitbart does this by once again quoting Kval: “*How can crime not have anything to do with immigration given that immigration brings with it poverty and poor living conditions leading to crime*”.

Where the first aspect of Breitbart’s argument concerning the cover-up on the relationship between crime and immigration concerns the dishonesty of the Swedish government and the researchers they employ, the second aspect concerns the complicity of Swedish media in the alleged conspiracy. In the article *Majority of Swedes Think Media Lies About the Impact of Mass Migration*, the writer asserts that “*The majority of people in Sweden believe the media is dishonest about problems in society associated with mass migration*”.⁸² The writer of this article quotes research by the Swedish Institute of Media Studies to support her assertion, and compares the discrepancy between the high level of general confidence that Swedes place in Swedish media, and the lack of confidence they feel in specific matters such as the media’s reporting on social problems associated with immigration and crime. She also notes that Swedes who express confidence in media are generally politically aligned with the ruling government coalition, whereas almost all Swedes who are aligned with the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats express scepticism in Swedish media. Lower confidence in the media’s

⁸⁰ Virginia Hale, *Claim: Researchers Covering Up Relationship Between Immigration and Crime*, Breitbart News, November 4, 2016 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2016/11/04/claim-coverup-immigration-crime-sweden/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁸¹ By this, I mean that Karl-Eirik Kval is unaffiliated with both Sweden and Breitbart.

⁸² Virginia Hale, *Majority of Swedes Think Media Lies About the Impact of Mass Migration*, Breitbart News, May 30, 2017 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/05/30/majority-swedes-media-lies-mass-migration/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

reporting on these subjects is also generally low among supporters of the liberal-conservative bloc. The perspective of active audience theory is important to this observation. Swedes are selective in their choice of media; some choose to trust the media because of their political alignment, others choose to not trust the media because of the same reason. This establishes a political element to the trust that Swedes place in media, and this political element is important to Breitbart's argument.

In another article, one titled *Swedish Bus Driver Suspended After Sharing Anti-Mass Migration Articles Online*,⁸³ the Swedish news site *Avpixlat* is characterised as “*part of the new media movement in Sweden*”. This article describes both “*the habitual censorship in Sweden’s mainstream media which sees photographs of migrant criminal suspects pixelated, and even their skin tone changed to hide the extent of migrant crime*”, and a specific case where a bus driver lost his job as a result of sharing articles from *Avpixlat*. The argument that Breitbart constructs here is one that positions mainstream media and alternative media, such as *Avpixlat*, as dichotomic opposites. The premise of this argument posits that mainstream media engages in censorship, and that engaging with material that is published by alternative media can have direct repercussions on one’s livelihood. The aforementioned article, *Swedish Prof: Hot Weather, Not Rapey Migrants Driving Sweden’s Place As The Rape Capital Of The World*, takes a less factual approach and instead ridicules Swedish media for what the writer perceives as a political unwillingness to report on the truth behind a series of rapes:

“Providing the perfect reason that absolves the Swedish establishment of all responsibility, Svensson described how we have been a bit unlucky with the weather this year. Hopefully we will have a colder summer next year and sexual crimes will then be an old memory linked to that one hot Swedish summer. If by any chance, there are still rapes during a colder summer, our experts will simply find another scapegoat rather than looking straight at the imported criminals. Perhaps fewer flies, or high ocean levels. Say hello to the mental hospital named Sweden everyone.”

This article concerns a case where a Swedish professor attributed the series of rapes to an unconventionally hot summer, something which Swedish media then also reported on. The writer of Breitbart's article lambasts Swedish media for deigning to attribute the rapes to the weather, when the writer finds it obvious that “*imported criminals*” are to blame. Breitbart portrays Swedish media as a mendacious entity bereft of journalistic integrity that is motivated by political correctness to engage in censorship of what Breitbart deems to be the truth. Meanwhile, the Swedish leadership is portrayed as a group of conspirators who are pulling the

⁸³ Oliver JJ Lane, *Swedish Bus Driver Suspended After Sharing Anti-Mass Migration Articles Online*, Breitbart News, March 9, 2016 - <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2016/03/09/bus-driver-suspended-for-sharing-immigration-critical-news-articles-on-social-media/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

strings by sponsoring unscientific and biased studies to their own benefit. Breitbart also implies through their argument that in Swedish society one stands to be punished for challenging the official narrative.

Like the previous argument regarding the relationship between immigration and crime, Breitbart finds the data to support their claim in various Swedish-media articles. However, whereas before they would repeat the original content of the articles factually but presented in a way that fits their argument, here they challenge the content of Swedish media. It is apparent that Breitbart is critical of Swedish media, and that they seek to undermine the integrity of Swedish media by highlighting the perceived absurdity in their reporting. Breitbart forms the claim of their argument by placing themselves in direct opposition to their data. The warrant for Breitbart's argument is their opposition to the data, since the premise of their argument relies on the assumption that Swedish media and the government is dishonest. Additional data is found in their heavy reliance on Kval's observations on Swedish media. In this instance, however, they fully support the data and employ it as the basis for their claim. The warrant for this part of the argument is both the critical nature of Kval's observations on Swedish media and his lack of affiliation to the Swedish establishment. By reconciling these two parts of the argument, I can interpret the following: by detailing ways in which the Swedish government and media fails to truthfully portray and engage with the negative aspects of immigration, Breitbart seeks to instil in their reader the premise that the Swedish establishment is disingenuous.

4. Discussion

Owing to a wealth of material to work with, a detailed analysis of Breitbart's two primary arguments dealing with Sweden was enabled. This argument analysis yielded the following results;

In the first primary argument, Breitbart claims that immigration to Sweden has led to increased crime rates and the existence of no-go zones. The crimes are specifically of a violent and sexual nature, which Breitbart attributes to the migrants generally originating from Islamic cultures. Breitbart juxtaposes a perceived misogynist and intolerant Islamic culture against a liberal and tolerant Western culture, which constitutes the premise for their argument. This premise also forms the basis for their claim that migrant communities of a non-Western culture eventually

develop no-go zones. Breitbart wants to portray a segregated and insecure society, where a white European identity is essentially threatened by the influx of non-white cultures, as it is thematic of their alt-right ideology to do so. A subordinated argument within this first argument is found in Breitbart's claim that Swedish leaders and politicians are aware of what immigration actually leads to. Breitbart portrays Swedish leaders as having an ideologically motivated disregard for victims of crime by migrants. This, too, is thematic of Breitbart's alt-right leanings in that it affirms their anti-establishment stance. In the second primary argument, Breitbart claims that the Swedish government and media are complicit in a cover-up to conceal the negative aspects of immigration from the Swedish people. This claim is based on the premise that the Swedish government and media are dishonest towards their constituents. This argument is connected to the previous one, but it stands out in its sensationalist claim that a nation-wide conspiracy is occurring in Sweden. I consider this argument to also be strongly symptomatic of alt-right thought.

Analysing the two arguments revealed strong similarities between them, and it is clear that Breitbart takes a strong anti-immigration stance. They are highly critical of the Swedish establishment, and the overall narrative is one of descent into chaos and a nation heading for ruin. Breitbart's motivation behind pushing this narrative is best explained by their alt-right leanings. It is important to recognise that Breitbart has an agenda behind their arguments. They want to influence their readership into accepting their depiction of Sweden. By placing the narrative that they compose into the hands of their readers, they can accomplish a greater spread of their views. This is an example of Breitbart's nature as a form of new media, and their interaction with their audience shows how cyberculture can contribute to the viral spread of ideas. Since Breitbart can be confidently stated as an ideological platform for the alt-right, they are also in ideological opposition to the Swedish government. This is again a motivation for their anti-Sweden agenda, a country which is in fact the perfect target for Breitbart's arguments. Sweden has real and documented cases of migrant criminality which Breitbart can latch onto and cherry-pick amongst, in order to depict a nation where humanitarian ideals have invited chaos. The inability of Swedish authorities and journalists to objectively confront the issues of migrant criminality also allows Breitbart to propagate their idea of a conspiracy theory.

When I conducted my analysis, I experienced my choice of method as functionally sound and adequate for my purposes. The great degree of freedom that Toulmin's model of argument analysis allowed me in interpreting Breitbart's arguments was very helpful. It also allowed me to move my focus from Breitbart's texts to the arguments found within. Toulmin encourages

the analyst to seek out the premise of an argument, which I strongly believe was helpful in tying Breitbart's arguments to their affiliation with alt-right ideology. A large part of my analysis consequently includes my own interpretations of Breitbart's arguments. However, it is my belief that further analysis of additional Breitbart articles, or even from other alt-right affiliated publications, would only reinforce my interpretations as opposed to disproving them.

5. Conclusion

This paper has, on account of a thorough analysis of articles published by Breitbart, managed to answer the questions posed in the introductory chapter. I had set out to show how the American alt-right portrays Sweden in media, what their primary arguments in doing so are, and the underlying premises of the arguments. This was accomplished by detailing the alt-right as a movement and ideology, and by identifying Breitbart News as an alt-right publication. I could then analyse Breitbart's articles to find what kind of arguments they use in their depiction of Sweden, and how they present said arguments. My analysis revealed two primary arguments; that Sweden's immigration has led to more sexual and violent crime and no-go zones, and that the Swedish government and media are engaging in a cover-up to keep the truth from the Swedish people. What my analysis also shows is that Breitbart are strongly opinionated against Sweden. I believe that this is because of Breitbart's strong affiliation with the alt-right, and that an anti-Sweden mentality is par for the course for an alt-right publication. The arguments that Breitbart present are thus fundamentally alt-right in nature, and are best understood by also possessing knowledge on the alt-right's ideology. This understanding allows me to identify the premises behind Breitbart's arguments. The premise of the first argument is as follows; white European culture is essentially incompatible with the migrants' culture, and immigration is therefore the cause behind increased crime and no-go zones. The premise of the second argument is then; the Swedish government and media are dishonest and engage in censorship, which leads to Breitbart's claim that a state-mandated cover-up is occurring.

This paper also puts into context the concepts of cyberculture, new media theory, and active audience theory to hopefully facilitate understanding of how the alt-right's arguments may achieve spread and acceptance. Although Breitbart as of today faces a plunging readership,

having progressively dropped to 7.8 million as of February 2018,⁸⁴ the arguments that they have shaped and spread still exists. Moreover, the alt-right does not show any signs of fading into irrelevance. The alt-right may therefore have caused an irreparable harm to the image of Sweden, which makes it all the more important to recognise the typical arguments they use to depict Sweden. Finally, I hope to have drawn a visible thread stretching from Trump's false remarks on Sweden in February 2017, through Breitbart News and their depiction of Sweden, and ending in the alt-right ideology – to show how these three are in fact related.

5.1 Future research suggestions

The topic of Sweden's depiction in media is intriguing, and invites further study. Breitbart's diminishing readership comes with the implication that other news sites have adopted Breitbart's rhetoric, and are thusly haemorrhaging their previous audience. An article in The New Republic, titled *The Breitbartization of Fox News*,⁸⁵ suggests that conservative mainstream news sites such as Fox News have done just that. A similar paper such as this could therefore be made, this time analysing Fox News' depiction of Sweden. The European Union also runs their own anti-disinformation website which is called euvsdisinfo.com. Part of this website's work is dedicated to dispelling falsities about Sweden that news sites with links to Russia spread.⁸⁶ This could also be an interesting study, as one could perform a comparative analysis to find differences and similarities between alt-right and Russian depictions of Sweden. Lastly, I believe that examining ways that Sweden is attempting combat unjust depictions in international media could also form the basis for an exciting study.

⁸⁴ Jason Schwartz, *Breitbart's readership plunges*, Politico, March 20, 2018 - <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/03/20/breitbart-readership-plunge-steve-bannon-474801> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁸⁵ Jeet Heer, *The Breitbartization of Fox News*, The New Republic, March 22, 2018 - <https://newrepublic.com/article/147605/breitbartization-fox-news> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

⁸⁶ Fredrik Sjöshult, *Så förvrängs bilden av Sverige på Putinsajter*, Expressen, May 18, 2018 - <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/sa-forvrangs-bilden-av-sverige-pa-putinsajter/> [accessed on May 19, 2018]

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