



Feign outrage, act surprised, accuse Russia: How Sweden reacts every time after mass car firebombing

Igor Ogorodnev, 16 Aug. 2018

More than 1,800 cars have been set on fire in Sweden since January and a record was reached this week as more than 100 were torched over several hours. After every incident, the same pantomime plays out, as if for the first time.

In this spectacle every actor, from righteous government politicians to confused police officers to concerned academics has their own part, played always with a straight face. While the latest incident provides a good case study, these steps can be transposed from Sweden to almost any Western European country, from a car burning to a mass riot to a gang rape.

Here is how the drill goes.

Bombastic outrage from ruling centrist politicians

The more routine something becomes, the more indignant the language deployed by the government to convince the people it still cares.

Socialist Prime Minister Stefan Lofven, who is facing an election next month, outdid himself this time.

“I am angry about this, for real,” the Prime Minister assured the audience during a radio interview. *“I ask the perpetrators, What the hell are you doing?”* he howled, as if he was personally interrogating them in the basement of his Stockholm palace.

Lofven appears to be living quite a tempestuous existence. In the past two years alone he felt *“a great anger”* over reports of Afghan refugees attacking women at music festivals, *“outraged”* about an attack on a

synagogue in Gothenburg, and “*furious*” about sharia patrols on Swedish streets.

If only there was a productive outlet for this man’s emotions.

Media reports appear suddenly very confused about what is happening, or why

Usually so clear and concise, news articles become detective mysteries to be pieced together by the reader.

There is talk of shadowy hooded figures, criminologists discussing that most such attacks happen in August before school starts (and?) or that car burning is a form of insurance fraud (this could well be true, but somehow one doubts that anyone is going to be lodging 100 simultaneous claims next week) that the mass arson was organized on social media, which is neither here nor there.

A representative locally-written New York Times [article](#) claims that the “*phenomenon has stymied the police and criminologists*” and later that it has “*left police officers scratching their heads as they struggle to find the root cause of the fires.*”

Like many others, the article believes that the torchings happen in high-crime areas with a significant proportion of immigrants is a coincidental irrelevance, even if it crops up again and again, and is inevitably the first comment below articles on the subject (albeit not in Swedish media, which doesn’t tend to allow comment sections).

Wait, wait, we’ve solved it, it’s the Russians

From the same NYT article.

“Residents cite disparate theories to explain the attacks, including blaming them on Russians trying to foment unrest before the election.”

Not only is it interesting that an article that has studiously avoided conclusions might suddenly get so specific, but some might find it hard to believe that among the “*disparate theories*” propounded by locals, sneaky Russian arsonists came out top. Still, as always, a reassuring use of anonymous and non-specific sources from that publication.

Or maybe it wasn’t the Russians, it was a false flag from the anti-migrant nationalists.

“I would not be surprised if far right extremists were involved in some way,” tweeted Daniel Riazat, a Left Party MP, apropos of nothing.

Perhaps best combine the two. Is Russia firebombing cars to help the anti-EU Sweden Democrats?

After all, the head of the Swedish intelligence called Russia "*the biggest threat to our security*," earlier this year, looking to meddle in the election. On the other hand, hundreds of burning cars are not a threat to national security, or political stability (perhaps not having them set on fire would be one way of taming those unruly nativists).

Hold on, we've caught them! It's not the Russians, so probably not worth the hoopla

To everyone's astonishment after all the next-level theorizing, the suspects, arrested on Wednesday, turned out to be three male acquaintances, aged between 16 and 21, one of whom was trying to enter Turkey, just as he was nabbed.

What punishment will they face for such a wanton act of destruction, worth millions of dollars damage and collective months of inconvenience? Sweden tightened up its laws last year, and now a theoretical six-year term is possible.

As a reference point, the three synagogue attackers that so "*outraged*" Lofven were sentenced to between 15 months and 2 years in prison. Despite none of them being Swedish citizens, two had their refugee residence permits extended, and were allowed to stay in the country. Would a similar sentence for car burning be a deterrent? Perhaps, if all arson cases that that didn't make the international news would be pursued with the same vigor.

The police and opposition parties agree that the resources don't exist for that, and promising to hire more cops has become a key pre-election pledge. Alternatively, the use of drones to search for arsonists may be stepped up, handy in areas where police don't go in [anyway](#).

Then the academic study. Always the study

In a country where newspapers tend to be cautious, academic research becomes more important, and likely to give a [true scale](#) of the [social](#) problem.

If Manne Gerrell, the arson-specializing criminologist who has been interviewed for multiple pieces over the coordinated fires, follows the timeline of his previous [research](#) on the subject (and decides to take up the latest incident), we might find the true cause of the Gothenburg torchings

sometimes in late 2019. By which time thousands more cars might have been set on fire, but at least there will be a balanced perspective.

Repeat?

As this scenario has played out over and over immigration has exploded (nearly one-in-five residents of the country were not born in Sweden) **violent** and **anti-woman** crime rates have spiked, and the number of "*vulnerable*" areas designated by the police keeps **going** up.

And all the same, the government hasn't changed. The Socialists have controlled Sweden for most of its post-War history, but will face a dead heart against a center-right coalition for the September 9 vote, and the surging Sweden Democrats, who may find themselves too short of friends to form a government, will at least provide an alternative voice to the stale puppetry show.

But to get Sweden to premiere a new play - hopefully, one that is more sincere and authentic - will require a deeper societal change, and not necessarily a voluntary one.

<https://www.rt.com/news/436080-sweden-firebombing-arson-lofven/>