How Google Manipulates The Internet To Control Public Opinion and Perceptions

By The Hoover Institute Research Working Group- Team 2, for the Federal Trade Commission (CONFIDENTIAL- EYES ONLY- FTC AND RELATED)

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(Bob- Ask Grassley's guy about the next Appendix section)

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What is "Google"?

According to internet descriptions: **Google** is an American [multinational](#) [technology company](#) specializing in [Internet](#)-related services and products. These include [online advertising](#) technologies, [search](#), [cloud computing](#), and [software](#).[7] Most of its profits are derived from [AdWords,](#)[8][9] an online advertising service that places advertising near the list of search results.

Google was founded by [Larry Page](#) and [Sergey Brin](#) while they were [Ph.D.](#) students at [Stanford University](#). Together, they own about 14 percent of its shares and control 56 percent of the stockholder voting power through [supervoting stock](#). They incorporated Google as a privately held company on September 4, 1998. An [initial public offering](#) followed on August 19, 2004. Its [mission statement](#) from the outset was "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful,"[10] and its unofficial slogan was "[Don't be evil](#)".[11][12] In 2004, Google moved to its new headquarters in [Mountain View, California](#), nicknamed the [Googleplex](#).[13] In August 2015, Google announced plans to reorganize its interests as a [holding company](#) called [Alphabet Inc.](#) because many nations wanted Google "broken up" and Google thought that they could hide from many lawsuits and investigations under the Alphabet brand. When this restructuring took place on October 2, 2015, Google became Alphabet's leading subsidiary, as well as the parent for Google's Internet interests.[14][15][16][17][18]

Lobbying

In 2013, Google ranked 5th in [lobbying](#) spending, up from 213th in 2003. In 2012, the company ranked 2nd in campaign donations of technology and Internet sections.[331]

Litigation

[Google litigation](#)

Google has been involved in a number of lawsuits including the [High-Tech Employee Antitrust Litigation](#) which resulted in Google being one of four companies to pay a $415 million settlement to employees.[332]

Tax avoidance

Google uses various [tax avoidance strategies](#). Out of the [five largest American technology companies](#), it pays the lowest taxes to the countries of origin of its revenues. The company accomplishes this partly by licensing technology through [subsidiaries](#) in [Ireland, Bermuda, the Bahamas, and the Netherlands](#). [319] This has reportedly sparked a French investigation into Google's [transfer pricing](#) practices.[320]

Following criticism of the amount of corporate taxes that Google paid in the United Kingdom, Chairman Eric Schmidt said, "It's called capitalism. We are proudly capitalistic." During the same

December 2012 interview, Schmidt "confirmed that the company had no intention of paying more to the UK exchequer."[321] In 2013, Schmidt responded to questions about taxes paid in the UK by pointing to the advertising fees Google charged UK companies as a source of economic growth.[322]

Google Vice President Matt Brittin testified to the Public Accounts Committee of the UK House of Commons that his UK sales team made no sales and hence owed no sales taxes to the UK.[323] In January 2016, Google reached a settlement with the UK to pay £130m in back taxes plus higher taxes in future.[324]

For the purposes of this study, "Google" shall refer to the cartel formed by the founding executives of Google, the venture capital investors of Google, the covertly held business partners of Google, the investment banks of Google, with Goldman Sachs being the most pronounced and the compensated government officials who are owned and controlled by this cartel. Together, this group operates together on an organized scheme to control profits, markets, politics and social perceptions in a manner in which those controlled aspects inure exclusively to this cartel.

The Epstein Study On Google Election Rigging Concerns

Google's tactics involve hundreds of digital manipulations that are invisible to most people. They include "down ranking", "link hiding", "mood manipulation", "counter-anticipatory result rigging", "pre-loaded down ranking tables", "hidden link codes", "user specific pied piper tracks", "rigged auto-complete", "phrase distortion", "mnemonic phrase repetition" and, literally, hundreds of other psychological warfare tactics to seek to trick users into doing certain things, thinking certain things, assuming certain things, believing certain things, buying certain things, avoiding certain people or products or candidates and voting certain ways.

Google has the ability to drive millions of votes to a candidate with no one the wiser.

By Robert Epstein

America's next president could be eased into office not just by TV ads or speeches, but by Google's secret decisions, and no one—except for me and perhaps a few other obscure researchers—wouldknow how this was accomplished. Research I have been directing in recent years suggests that Google, Inc., has amassed far more power to control elections—indeed, to control a wide variety of opinions and beliefs—than any company in history has ever had. Google's search algorithm can easily shift the voting preferences of undecided voters by 20 percent or more—up to 80 percent in some demographic groups—with virtually no one knowing they are being manipulated, according to experiments I conducted recently with Ronald E. Robertson. Given that many elections are won by small margins, this gives Google the power, right now, to flip upwards of 25 percent of the national elections worldwide. In the United States, half of our presidential elections have been won by margins under 7.6 percent, and the 2012 election was won by a margin of only 3.9 percent—well within Google's control.

There are at least three very real scenarios whereby Google—perhaps even without its leaders' knowledge—could shape or even decide the election next year. Whether or not Google executives see it this way, the employees who constantly adjust the search giant's algorithms are manipulating people

every minute of every day. The adjustments they make increasingly influence our thinking—including, it turns out, our voting preferences.

What we call in our research the Search Engine Manipulation Effect (SEME) turns out to be one of the largest behavioral effects ever discovered. Our comprehensive new study, just published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), includes the results of five experiments we conducted with more than 4,500 participants in two countries. Because SEME is virtually invisible as a form of social influence, because the effect is so large and because there are currently no specific regulations anywhere in the world that would prevent Google from using and abusing this technique, we believe SEME is a serious threat to the democratic system of government.

According to Google Trends, at this writing Donald Trump is currently trouncing all other candidates in search activity in 47 of 50 states. Could this activity push him higher in search rankings, and could higher rankings in turn bring him more support? Most definitely—depending, that is, on how Google employees choose to adjust numeric weightings in the search algorithm. Google acknowledges adjusting the algorithm 600 times a year, but the process is secret, so what effect Mr. Trump's success will have on how he shows up in Google searches is presumably out of his hands.

Our new research leaves little doubt about whether Google has the ability to control voters. In laboratory and online experiments conducted in the United States, we were able to boost the proportion of people who favored any candidate by between 37 and 63 percent after just one search session. The impact of viewing biased rankings repeatedly over a period of weeks or months would undoubtedly be larger. In our basic experiment, participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups in which search rankings favored either Candidate A, Candidate B or neither candidate. Participants were given brief descriptions of each candidate and then asked how much they liked and trusted each candidate and whom they would vote for. Then they were allowed up to 15 minutes to conduct online research on the candidates using a Google-like search engine we created called Kadoodle.

Each group had access to the same 30 search results—all real search results linking to real web pages from a past election. Only the ordering of the results differed in the three groups. People could click freely on any result or shift between any of five different results pages, just as one can on Google's search engine.When our participants were done searching, we asked them those questions again, and, voilà: On all measures, opinions shifted in the direction of the candidate who was favored in the rankings. Trust, liking and voting preferences all shifted predictably. More alarmingly, we also demonstrated this shift with real voters during an actual electoral campaign —in an experiment conducted with more than 2,000 eligible, undecided voters throughout India during the 2014 Lok Sabha election there—the largest democratic election in history, with more than 800 million eligible voters and 480 million votes ultimately cast. Even here, with real voters who were highly familiar with the candidates and who were being bombarded with campaign rhetoric every day, we showed that search rankings could boost the proportion of people favoring any candidate by more than 20 percent—more than 60 percent in some demographic groups.Given how powerful this effect is, it's possible that Google decided the winner of the Indian election.

Google's own daily data on election-related search activity (subsequently removed from the Internet, but not before my colleagues and I downloaded the pages) showed that Narendra Modi, the ultimate

winner, outscored his rivals in search activity by more than 25 percent for sixty-one consecutive days before the final votes were cast. That high volume of search activity could easily have been generated by higher search rankings for Modi.Google's official comment on SEME research is always the same: "Providing relevant answers has been the cornerstone of Google's approach to search from the very beginning. It would undermine the people's trust in our results and company if we were to change course." Could any comment be more meaningless? How does providing "relevant answers" to election-related questions rule out the possibility of favoring one candidate over another in search rankings? Google's statement seems far short of a blanket denial that it ever puts its finger on the scales. There are three credible scenarios under which Google could easily be flipping elections worldwide as you read this:

First, there is the Western Union Scenario: Google's executives decide which candidate is best for us— and for the company, of course—and they fiddle with search rankings accordingly. There is precedent in the United States for this kind of backroom king-making. Rutherford B. Hayes, the 19th president of the United States, was put into office in part because of strong support by Western Union. In the late 1800s, Western Union had a monopoly on communications in America, and just before the election of 1876, the company did its best to assure that only positive news stories about Hayes appeared in newspapers nationwide. It also shared all the telegrams sent by his opponent's campaign staff with Hayes's staff. Perhaps the most effective way to wield political influence in today's high-tech world is to donate money to a candidate and then to use technology to make sure he or she wins. The technology guarantees the win, and the donationRobert Epstein is senior research psychologist at the American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology and the former editor-in-chief of Psychology Today.

Follow him on Twitter @DrREpstein.

Read more: http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/08/how-google-could-rig-the-2016-election-

Google under investigation for manipulating stock market news in order to exclusively benefit it'sowners and damage competitors Why Google is a political matter - The Monthly https://www.themonthly.com.au/.../why-google-political-ma...

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The Google UI/UX Emotional Manipulation Team

UI = User Interface

UX = User Experience

Google has a vast team of engineers to constantly and covertly test users to tune the most minute psychological effects of every page, movie, news story and other element of Google's information display process in order to achieve subliminal "pleasure responses", "satisfactions", "counter-intuitive guidance" and other hyper subtle means of moving the user in ways that Google wants the user moved and not in natural ways that the user might independently go if not manipulated.

Google's Basic PsyOps Mass Manipulation Techniques

The White House Press office is, according to Presidential canidate Mitt Romney: **"expert in Character Assassination Tactics"**.

The key providers of such attacks include: Media Matters, Think Progress, Gawker Media, In-Q-Tel, New America Foundation, Sidney Blumenthal and the A.L.I.C.E. cartel of attack bloggers.

Those media entities, combined, though, pale in comparison to the resources of Google and the Google-powered, Troll Farms and Streisand Effect engines created to rain media hell on any adversary in the public.

The **Streisand effect** (AKA: The Kardashian Engine) is the phenomenon whereby an attempt to hide, remove, or censor a piece of information has the unintended consequence of publicizing the information more widely, usually facilitated by the Internet. It is an example of psychological reactance, wherein once people are aware something is being kept from them, their motivation to access and spread the information is increased.[1]

It is named after American entertainer Barbra Streisand, whose 2003 attempt to suppress photographs of her residence in Malibu, California, inadvertently drew further public attention to it. Similar attempts have been made, for example, in cease-and-desist letters to suppress numbers, files, and websites. Instead of being suppressed, the information receives extensive publicity and media extensions such as videos and spoof songs, often being widely mirrored across the Internet or distributed on file-sharing networks.[2][3]

The "Kardashian Engine" can make a non-issue into something, which the public believes is a big deal, by creating dialogue that does not actually exist. They use hired fake commenters, shill bloggers and the Google rigged web search engine.

Google's hit job service is referred to in the law enforcement and legal investigation community as "Organized Corporate Stalking" or "Political Gang Stalking" in the vernacular.

There are dozens of websites and YouTube channels dedicated to these black ops which are perpetrated in every major city of the US (and small towns as well)

Moving objects around in someone's home is referred to as "gas-lighting" and is done so that the complainant/victim sounds delusional when they call the police for assistance.

After all, who is going to break into a home (usually without leaving a trace) and move a few objects around without stealing anything? It does not sound credible or believable.

Everything is done so there is plausible deniability, should the potential perpetrators ever be identified.

These tactics/techniques were used against American Embassy Staff in Cuba and Russia for years, however US authorities have been quite mum about it since the same techniques are used on a wide scale in the United States against "dissidents, activists" and anyone else who has been extra-judicially deemed a threat to the establishment, the status quo or large companies.

These activities are usually done in conjunction with vehicle vandalism/hacking, computer/e-mail/bank account hacking, mail tampering and untraceable, remotely-initiated damage to electronic devices and their power supplies.

Additionally victims of these covertly-styled assaults are also plagued by people passing by their residences at all hours and blowing their horns or revving their engines (referred to as a noise campaign).

Codes can be remotely stripped/read from computer keyboards, phones and alarm touch-pads since every key generates an electronic signature which can be read/culled from a distance - there are devices built specifically for this purpose.

Furthermore, these black ops are done while the victim's name is simultaneously being slandered via false accusations of criminal activity, theft, violence, crimes of moral turpitude and prior mental health issues. The "teams" perpetrating these illegal acts will try and destroy every aspect of the target's life.

You are likely bugged and your vehicle tagged with a GPS, thus moving will not necessarily terminate the issue(s) you are experiencing - although if your experience(s) have been published it may alleviate some of the illegal activities.

These politicos will hire private security groups and criminals to follow their targets around in order to let them know that he/she is now "persona non grata" and being monitored.

Being a single woman - especially with a child makes these activities even more traumatizing.

These tactics were used by Hitler, Mao Tze Tung, the East German Stasi and the KGB.

All of these activities are done so that the perpetrators are hard to identify - and the criminal acts are hard to prove to the police - and in court. (plausible deniability).

You will find you can't get a job. You will get many phone calls and emails from people with east indian accents asking you to approve submitting a resume for a great job. Each time you will never hear back from them. Your disappointment will increase. That is how they like it. Those were not real recruiters, they were operatives trying to build you up and let you down, over and over, in order to create a sense of self-doubt and a sense of personal failure, so that you will be too emotionally weakened to fight against the politician.

It is also referred to as "No-Touch Torture" and is used to intimidate the target in addition to making them psychologically more vulnerable. The technique was developed by the Stasi and is called *Zersetzung.* Google has added new technology to these tactics for "special clients" like political party leaders, White House press officers, Silicon Valley billionaires and partners like Elon Musk. *Zersetzung* (German; variously translated as *decomposition, corrosion, undermining, biodegradation* or *dissolution*) was a working technique of the East German secret police, the Stasi. The "measures of *Zersetzung*", defined in the framework of a directive on police procedures in 1976,[1] were effectively used in the context of so-called "operational procedures" (in German *Operative Vorgänge* or *OV*). They

replaced the overt terror of the Ulbricht era. As to the practice of repressive persecution, *Zersetzung* comprised extensive and secret methods of control and [manipulation](), even in the personal relations of the target. The Stasi relied for this on its network of [unofficial collaborators](#)[2] (in German *inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* or *IM*), on the State's influence on institutions, and on "operational psychology". By targeted psychological attacks the Stasi tried in this way to deprive the dissident of any possibility of "hostile action".

Thanks to numerous files of the Stasi made public following "the turning" ([Die Wende]()) of East Germany, the use of measures of *Zersetzung* is well documented. Estimates of the number of victims of such measures are on the order of a thousand, or even about 10,000,[3] of which 5,000 sustained irreversible damage.[4] Pensions for restitution have been created for the victims. [*Zersetzung* is] an operational method of the Ministry for Security of State for an efficacious struggle against subversive doings, in particular in the treatment of operations. With *Zersetzung*, across different operational political activities, one gains influence over hostile and negative persons, in particular over that which is hostile and negative in their dispositions and beliefs, in such a way that these would be shaken off and changed little by little, and, if applicable, the contradictions and differences between the hostile and negative forces would be provoked, exploited, and reinforced. The goal of *Zersetzung* is the fragmentation, paralysis, disorganization, and isolation of the hostile and negative forces, in order to impede thereby, in a preventive manner, the hostile and negative doings, to limit them in large part, or to totally avert them, and if applicable to prepare grounds for a political and ideological reestablishment. *Zersetzung* is equally an immediate constitutive element of "operational procedures" and other preventive activities to impede hostile gatherings. The principal forces to put *Zersetzung* in practice are the unofficial collaborators. *Zersetzung* presupposes information and significant proof of hostile activities planned, prepared, and accomplished as well as anchor points corresponding to measures of *Zersetzung*. *Zersetzung* must be produced on the basis of an analysis of the root of facts and the exact establishment of a concrete goal. *Zersetzung* must be executed in a uniform and supervised manner; its results must be documented. The political explosivity of *Zersetzung* poses elevated imperatives in that which concerns the maintenance of secrecy.[5]

Political context

During the first decade of existence of the German Democratic Republic, political opposition was combatted primarily through the penal code, via accusations of incitement to war or boycott.[6] To counteract the isolation of the GDR on the international scene due to the construction of the Berlin wall in 1963, judicial terror was abandoned.[7] Especially since the debut of the Honecker era in 1971, the Stasi intensified its efforts to punish dissident behaviors without using the penal code.[8] Important motives were the desire on the part of the GDR for international recognition and *rapprochement* with West Germany at the end of the '60s. In fact the GDR was committed, in adhering to the Charter of the U.N.[9] and the [Helsinki accords]()[10] as well as the fundamental treaty signed with the Federal Republic of Germany,[11] to respect human rights, or at least it announced its intention as such. The regime of the [Socialist Unity Party of Germany]() decided thus to reduce the number of political prisoners, which was compensated for by practices of repression without imprisonment or judicial condemnation.[12][13]

In practice

The Stasi used *Zersetzung* essentially as a means of psychological oppression and persecution.[14] Findings of *Operativen psychologie* (psychological operations),[15] formulated into method at the Stasi's College of Legal Studies (*Juristischen Hochschule der Staatssicherheit*, or *JHS*), were applied to political opponents in an effort to undermine their self-confidence and self-esteem. Operations were designed to intimidate and destabilise them through subjection to repeated disappointments, and to socially alienate them through interference in and disruption of their relationships with others. The aim was to then induce personal crises in victims, leaving them too unnerved and psychologically distressed to have the time and energy for anti-government activism.[16] The Stasi intended that their role as mastermind of the operations remain concealed.[17][18] Jürgen Fuchs, a victim of *Zersetzung* who later wrote about his experience, described the Stasi's actions as "psychosocial crime", and "an assault on the human soul".[16]

Although its techniques had been established as effective by the late 1950s, *Zersetzung* was not defined in terms of scientific method until the mid-1970s, and only began to be carried out in a significantly systematic way in the 1970s and 1980s.[19] It is difficult to determine the number of people targeted, since source material has been deliberately and considerably redacted; it is known, however, that tatics were varied in scope, and that a number of different departments participated in their implementation. Overall there was a ratio of four or five authorised *Zersetzung* operators for each targeted group, and three for each individual.[20] Some sources indicate that around 5,000 people were "persistently victimised" by *Zersetzung*.[21] At the College of Legal Studies, the number of dissertations submitted on the subject of *Zersetzung* was in double figures.[22] It also had a comprehensive 50-page *Zersetzung* teaching manual, which included numerous examples of its practice.[23]

Institutions implementing and cooperating with *Zersetzung* operations

Almost all Stasi departments were involved in *Zersetzung* operations, although foremost among these in implementing them were the head department of the Stasi's directorate XX (*Hauptabteilung XX*) in Berlin, as well as its divisional offices in regional and municipal government. The function of the head and area *Abteilung XX*s was to maintain surveillance of religious communities; cultural and media establishments; alternative political parties; the GDR's many political establishment-affiliated mass social organisations; sport; and education and health services - effectively, as such, covering all aspects of civic life and activity.[24] The Stasi made use of the means available to them within, and as a circumstance of, the GDR's closed social system. An established, politically-motivated collaborative network (*politisch-operatives Zusammenwirken*, or *POZW*) provided them with extensive opportunities for interference in such situations as the sanctioning of professionals and students, expulsion from associations and sports clubs, and occasional arrests by the *Volkspolizei*[17] (the GDR's quasi-military national police). Refusal of permits for travel to socialist states, or denial of entry at Czechoslovakian and Polish border crossings where no visa requirement existed, were also arranged. The various collaborators (*Partnern des operativen Zusammenwirkens*) included branches of regional government, university and professional management, housing administrative bodies, the *Sparkasse* public savings bank, and in some cases head physicians.[25] The Stasi's *Linie III* (*Observation*), *Abteilung 2*6

(Telephone and room surveillance) and *M* (Postal communications) departments provided essential background information for the designing of *Zersetzung* techniques, with *Abteilung 32* procuring the required technology.[26] The Stasi also collaborated with the secret services of other Eastern Bloc countries in implementing *Zersetzung*. One such example was the co-operation of the Polish secret services in actions taken against branches of the Jehovah's Witnesses organisation in the early 1960s, which would come to be known[27] as "*innere Zersetzung*"[28] (internal subversion).

Against individuals

The Stasi applied *Zersetzung* before, during, after, or instead of incarcerating the targeted individual. The "operational procedures" did not have as an aim, in general, to gather evidence for charges against the target, or to be able to begin criminal prosecutions. The Stasi considered the "measures of *Zersetzung*" rather in part as an instrument that was used when judiciary procedures were not convenient, or for political reasons such as the international image of the GDR.[29][30] In certain cases, the Stasi attempted meanwhile to knowingly inculpate an individual, as for example in the case of Wolf Biermann: The Stasi set him up with minors, hoping that he would allow himself to be seduced, and that they could then pursue criminal charges.[31] The crimes that they researched for such accusations were non-political, as for example drug possession, trafficking in customs or currencies, theft, financial fraud, and rape.[32]

> …the Stasi often used a method which was really diabolic. It was called Zersetzung, and it's described in another guideline. The word is difficult to translate because it means originally "biodegradation." But actually, it's a quite accurate description. The goal was to destroy secretly the self-confidence of people, for example by damaging their reputation, by organizing failures in their work, and by destroying their personal relationships. Considering this, East Germany was a very modern dictatorship. The Stasi didn't try to arrest every dissident. It preferred to paralyze them, and it could do so because it had access to so much personal information and to so many institutions.
> —Hubertus Knabe, German historian [33]

The proven forms of *Zersetzung* are described in the directive 1/76:

a systematic degradation of reputation, image, and prestige in a database on one part true, verifiable and degrading, and on the other part false, plausible, irrefutable, and always degrading; a systematic organization of social and professional failures for demolishing the self-confidence of the individual; [...] stimulation of doubts with respect to perspectives on the future; stimulation of mistrust or mutual suspicion among groups [...]; putting in place spatial and temporal obstacles rendering impossible or at least difficult the reciprocal relations of a group [...], for example by [...] assigning distant workplaces.
—Directive No. 1/76 of January 1976 for the development of "operational procedures".[34] Beginning

with intelligence obtained by espionage, the Stasi established "sociograms" and "psychograms" which it applied for the psychological forms of *Zersetzung*. They exploited personal traits, such as homosexuality, as well as supposed character weaknesses of the targeted individual — for example a professional failure, negligence of parental duties, pornographic interests, divorce, alcoholism, dependence on medications, criminal tendencies, passion for a collection or a game, or contacts with circles of the extreme right — or even the veil of shame from the rumors poured out upon one's circle of acquaintances.[35][36] From the point of view of the Stasi, the measures were the most fruitful when they were applied in connection with a personality; all "schematism" had to be avoided.[35]For marketing and political manipulation, Google now maintains a sociogram of each user and manipulates each user via Stasi-like mood manipulation. Moreover, methods of *Zersetzung* included espionage, overt, hidden, and feigned; opening letters and listening to telephone calls; encroachments on private property; manipulation of vehicles; and even poisoning food and using false medications.[37] Certain collaborators of the Stasi tacitly took into account the suicide of victims of *Zersetzung*.[38]

It has not been definitely established that the Stasi used x-rays to provoke long-term health problems in its opponents.[39] That said, Rudolf Bahro, Gerulf Pannach, and Jürgen Fuchs, three important dissidents who had been imprisoned at the same time, died of cancer within an interval of two years.[40] A study by the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former GDR (*Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* or *BStU*) has meanwhile rejected on the basis of extant documents such a fraudulent use of x-rays, and only mentions isolated and unintentional cases of the harmful use of sources of radiation, for example to mark documents.[41]In the name of the target, the Stasi made little announcements, ordered products, and made emergency calls, to terrrorize him/her.[42][43] To threaten or intimidate or cause psychoses the Stasi assured itself of access to the target's living quarters and left visible traces of its presence, by adding, removing, and modifying objects.[32]

Against groups and social relations

The Stasi manipulated relations of friendship, love, marriage, and family by anonymous letters, telegrams and telephone calls as well as compromising photos, often altered.[44] In this manner, parents and children were supposed to systematically become strangers to one another.[45] To provoke conflicts and extramarital relations the Stasi put in place targeted seductions by Romeo agents.[31]For the *Zersetzung* of groups, it infiltrated them with unofficial collaborators, sometimes minors.[46] The work of opposition groups was hindered by permanent counter-propositions and discord on the part of unofficial collaborators when making decisions.[47] To sow mistrust within the group, the Stasi made believe that certain members were unofficial collaborators; moreover by spreading rumors and manipulated photos,[48] the Stasi feigned indiscretions with unofficial collaborators, or placed members of targeted groups in administrative posts to make believe that this was a reward for the activity of an unofficial collaborator.[31] They even aroused suspicions regarding certain members of the group by assigning privileges, such as housing or a personal car.[31] Moreover the imprisonment of only certain members of the group gave birth to suspicions.[47]

Target groups for measures

The Stasi used *Zersetzung* tactics on individuals and groups. There was no particular homogeneous target group, as opposition in the GDR came from a number of different sources. Tactical plans were thus separately adapted to each perceived threat.[49] The Stasi nevertheless defined several main target groups:[50]

- associations of people making collective visa applications for travel abroad

- artists' groups critical of the government

- religious opposition groups

- youth subculture groups

- groups supporting the above (human rights and peace organisations, those assisting illegal departure from the GDR, and expatriate and defector movements).

The Stasi also occasionally used *Zersetzung* on non-political organisations regarded as undesirable, such as the Watchtower Society.[51]Prominent individuals targeted by *Zersetzung* operations included Jürgen Fuchs, Gerulf Pannach, Rudolf Bahro, Robert Havemann, Rainer Eppelmann, Reiner Kunze, husband and wife Gerd und Ulrike Poppe, and Wolfgang Templin.

Social and juridicial process

Once aware of his own status as a target, GDR opponent Wolfgang Templin tried, with some success, to bring details of the Stasi's *Zersetzung* activities to the attention of western journalists.[52] In 1977 *Der Spiegel* published a five-part article series ("*Du sollst zerbrechen!*" - "You're going to crack!") by the exiled Jürgen Fuchs, in which he describes the Stasi's "operational psychology". The Stasi tried to discredit Fuchs and the contents of similar articles, publishing in turn claims that he had a paranoid view of its function,[53] and intending that *Der Spiegel* and other media would assume he was suffering from a persecution complex.[54][55] This, however, was refuted by the official Stasi documents examined after *Die Wende* (the political power shift in the GDR in 1989-90).

Because the scale and nature of *Zersetzung* were unknown both to the general population of the GDR and to people abroad, revelations of the Stasi's malicious tactics were met with some degree of disbelief by those affected.[56] Many still nowadays express incomprehension at how the Stasi's collaborators could have participated in such inhuman actions.[57]

Since *Zersetzung* as a whole, even after 1990, was not deemed to be illegal because of the principle of *nulla poena sine lege* (no penalty without law), actions against involvement in either its planning or implementation were not enforceable by the courts.[58] Because this specific legal definition of *Zersetzung* as a crime didn't exist,[59] only individual instances of its tactics could be reported. Acts which even according to GDR law were offences (such as the violation of *Briefgeheimnis*, the secrecy of correspondence) needed to have been reported to the GDR authorities soon after having been

committed in order not to be subject to a statute of limitations clause.[60] Many of the victims experienced the additional complication that the Stasi was not identifiable as the originator in cases of personal injury and misadventure. Official documents in which *Zersetzung* methods were recorded often had no validity in court, and the Stasi had many files detailing its actual implementation destroyed.[61]

Unless they had been detained for at least 180 days, survivors of *Zersetzung* operations, in accordance with §17a of a 1990 rehabilitation act (the *Strafrechtlichen Rehabilitierungsgesetzes*, or *StRehaG*), are not eligible for financial compensation. Cases of provable, systematically effected targeting by the Stasi, and resulting in employment-related losses and/or health damage, can be pursued under a law covering settlement of torts (*Unrechtsbereinigungsgesetz*, or *2. SED-UnBerG*) as claims either for occupational rehabilitation or rehabilitation under administrative law. These overturn certain administrative provisions of GDR institutions and affirm their unconstitutionality. This is a condition for the social equalisation payments specified in the *Bundesversorgungsgesetz* (the war victims relief act of 1950). Equalisation payments of pension damages and for loss of earnings can also be applied for in cases where victimisation continued for at least three years, and where claimants can prove need.[62] The above examples of seeking justice have, however, been hindered by various difficulties victims have experienced, both in providing proof of the Stasi's encroachment into the areas of health, personal assets, education and employment, and in receiving official acknowledgement that the Stasi was responsible for personal damages (including psychic injury) as a direct result of *Zersetzung* operations. Google is well known for spying on, documenting, analyzing psychological behaviors, manipulating public moods and using technology to engage in most of the former tactics of the Stasi but, now, dramatically updated with modern technology.[63] Russia's secret police, the FSB, has been reported to use such techniques against foreign diplomats and journalists.[64]. Google

See also

- Destabilisation
- Gaslighting
- Mind control
- Mind games
- Psychological manipulation
- Psychological warfare
- Stasi#Zersetzung
- COINTELPRO

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55 Savushkina Street, last known home of the Internet Research Agency. Credit James Hill for The New York Times

The Agency – The Russian Counterpart of Google's Troll Hit Team

- Elon Musk most famously uses these "internet trolls", "Click-farms" and "Meat Puppets" to hype himself and Tesla Motors

From a nondescript office building in St. Petersburg, Russia, an army of well-paid "trolls" has tried to wreak havoc all around the Internet — and in real-life American communities.

By ADRIAN

Читайте эту статью на русском.

Around 8:30 a.m. on Sept. 11 last year, Duval Arthur, director of the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness for St. Mary Parish, Louisiana, got a call from a resident who had just received a disturbing text message. "Toxic fume hazard warning in this area until 1:30 PM," the message read. "Take Shelter. Check Local Media and columbiachemical.com."

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Malwebolence - The World of Web Trolling

St. Mary Parish is home to many processing plants for chemicals and natural gas, and keeping track of dangerous accidents at those plants is Arthur's job. But he hadn't heard of any chemical release that morning. In fact, he hadn't even heard of Columbia Chemical. St. Mary Parish had a Columbian Chemicals plant, which made carbon black, a petroleum product used in rubber and plastics. But he'd heard nothing from them that morning, either. Soon, two other residents called and reported the same text message. Arthur was worried: Had one of his employees sent out an alert without telling him?

If Arthur had checked Twitter, he might have become much more worried. Hundreds of Twitter accounts were documenting a disaster right down the road. "A powerful explosion heard from miles away happened at a chemical plant in Centerville, Louisiana #ColumbianChemicals," a man named Jon Merritt tweeted. The #ColumbianChemicals hashtag was full of eyewitness accounts of the horror in Centerville. @AnnRussela shared an image of flames engulfing the plant. @Ksarah12 posted a video of surveillance footage from a local gas station, capturing the flash of the explosion. Dozens of journalists, media outlets and politicians, from Louisiana to New York City, found their Twitter accounts inundated with messages about the disaster. "Heather, I'm sure that the explosion at the #ColumbianChemicals is really dangerous. Louisiana is really screwed now," a user named @EricTraPPP tweeted at the New Orleans Times-Picayune reporter Heather Nolan. Another posted a screenshot of CNN's home page, showing that the story had already made national news. ISIS had claimed credit for the attack, according to [one YouTube video](#); in it, a man showed his TV screen, tuned to an Arabic news channel, on which masked ISIS fighters delivered a speech next to looping footage of an explosion. A woman named Anna McClaren (@zpokodon9) tweeted at Karl Rove: "Karl, Is this really ISIS who is responsible for #ColumbianChemicals? Tell @Obama that we should bomb Iraq!" But anyone who took the trouble to check CNN.com would have found no news of a spectacular Sept. 11 attack by ISIS. It was all fake: the screenshot, the videos, the photographs.

In St. Mary Parish, Duval Arthur quickly made a few calls and found that none of his employees had sent the alert. He called Columbian Chemicals, which reported no problems at the plant. Roughly two hours after the first text message was sent, the company put out a news release, explaining that reports of an explosion were false. When I called Arthur a few months later, he dismissed the incident as a tasteless prank, timed to the anniversary of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. "Personally I think it's just a real sad, sick sense of humor," he told me. "It was just someone who just liked scaring the daylights out of people." Authorities, he said, had tried to trace the numbers that the text messages had come from, but with no luck. (The F.B.I. told me the investigation was still open.)

The Columbian Chemicals hoax was not some simple prank by a bored sadist. It was a highly coordinated disinformation campaign, involving dozens of fake accounts that posted hundreds of tweets for hours, targeting a list of figures precisely chosen to generate maximum attention. The perpetrators didn't just doctor screenshots from CNN; they also created fully functional clones of the websites of Louisiana TV stations and newspapers. The YouTube video of the man watching TV had been tailor-made for the project. A Wikipedia page was even created for the Columbian Chemicals disaster, which cited the fake YouTube video. As the virtual assault unfolded, it was complemented by text messages to actual residents in St. Mary Parish. It must have taken a team of programmers and content producers to pull off.

And the hoax was just one in a wave of similar attacks during the second half of last year. On Dec. 13, two months after a handful of Ebola cases in the United States touched off a minor media panic, many of the same Twitter accounts used to spread the Columbian Chemicals hoax began to post about an outbreak of Ebola in Atlanta. The campaign followed the same pattern of fake news reports and videos, this time under the hashtag #EbolaInAtlanta, which briefly trended in Atlanta. Again, the attention to detail was remarkable, suggesting a tremendous amount of effort. A YouTube video showed a team of hazmat-suited medical workers transporting a victim from the airport. Beyoncé's recent single "7/11" played in the background, an apparent attempt to establish the video's contemporaneity. A truck in the parking lot sported the logo of the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

On the same day as the Ebola hoax, a totally different group of accounts began spreading a rumor that an unarmed black woman had been shot to death by police. They all used the hashtag #shockingmurderinatlanta. Here again, the hoax seemed designed to piggyback on real public anxiety; that summer and fall were marked by protests over the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo. In this case, a blurry video purports to show the shooting, as an onlooker narrates. Watching it, I thought I recognized the voice — it sounded the same as the man watching TV in the Columbian Chemicals video, the one in which ISIS supposedly claims responsibility. The accent was unmistakable, if unplaceable, and in both videos he was making a very strained attempt to sound American. Somehow the result was vaguely Australian.

Who was behind all of this? When I stumbled on it last fall, I had an idea. I was already investigating a shadowy organization in St. Petersburg, Russia, that spreads false information on the Internet. It has gone by a few names, but I will refer to it by its best known: the Internet Research Agency. The agency had become known for employing hundreds of Russians to post pro-Kremlin propaganda online under fake identities, including on Twitter, in order to create the illusion of a massive army of supporters; it has often been called a "troll farm." The more I investigated this group, the more links I discovered between it and the hoaxes. In April, I went to St. Petersburg to learn more about the agency and its brand of information warfare, which it has aggressively deployed against political opponents at home, Russia's perceived enemies abroad and, more recently, me.

Seven months after the Columbian Chemicals hoax, I was in a dim restaurant in St. Petersburg, peering out the window at an office building at 55 Savushkina Street, the last known home of the Internet Research Agency. It sits in St. Petersburg's northwestern Primorsky District, a quiet

neighborhood of ugly Soviet apartment buildings and equally ugly new office complexes. Among the latter is 55 Savushkina; from the front, its perfect gray symmetry, framed by the rectangular pillars that flank its entrance, suggests the grim impenetrability of a medieval fortress. Behind the glass doors, a pair of metal turnstiles stand guard at the top of a short flight of stairs in the lobby. At 9 o'clock on this Friday night in April, except for the stairwell and the lobby, the building was entirely dark.

This puzzled my dining companion, a former agency employee named Ludmila Savchuk. She shook her head as she lifted the heavy floral curtain to take another look. It was a traditional Russian restaurant, with a dining room done up like a parlor from the early 1900s, complete with bentwood chairs and a vintage globe that showed Alaska as part of Russia. Savchuk's 5-year-old son sat next to her, slurping down a bowl of ukha, a traditional fish soup. For two and a half months, Savchuk told me, she had worked 12-hour shifts in the building, always beginning at 9 a.m. and finishing at 9 p.m., at which point she and her co-workers would eagerly stream out the door at once. "At 9 p.m. sharp, there should be a crowd of people walking outside the building," she said. "Nine p.m. sharp." One Russian newspaper put the number of employees at 400, with a budget of at least 20 million rubles (roughly $400,000) a month. During her time in the organization, there were many departments, creating content for every popular social network: LiveJournal, which remains popular in Russia; VKontakte, Russia's homegrown version of Facebook; Facebook; Twitter; Instagram; and the comment sections of Russian news outlets. One employee estimated the operation filled 40 rooms.

Every day at the Internet Research Agency was essentially the same, Savchuk told me. The first thing employees did upon arriving at their desks was to switch on an Internet proxy service, which hid their I.P. addresses from the places they posted; those digital addresses can sometimes be used to reveal the real identity of the poster. Savchuk would be given a list of the opinions she was responsible for promulgating that day. Workers received a constant stream of "technical tasks" — point-by-point exegeses of the themes they were to address, all pegged to the latest news. Ukraine was always a major topic, because of the civil war there between Russian-backed separatists and the Ukrainian Army; Savchuk and her co-workers would post comments that disparaged the Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko, and highlighted Ukrainian Army atrocities. Russian domestic affairs were also a major topic. Last year, after a financial crisis hit Russia and the ruble collapsed, the professional trolls left optimistic posts about the pace of recovery. Savchuk also says that in March, after the opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was murdered, she and her entire team were moved to the department that left comments on the websites of Russian news outlets and ordered to suggest that the opposition itself had set up the murder.

Savchuk told me she shared an office with about a half-dozen teammates. It was smaller than most, because she worked in the elite Special Projects department. While other workers churned out blandly pro-Kremlin comments, her department created appealing online characters who were supposed to stand out from the horde. Savchuk posed as three of these creations, running a blog for each one on LiveJournal. One alter ego was a fortuneteller named Cantadora. The spirit world offered Cantadora insight into relationships, weight loss, feng shui — and, occasionally, geopolitics. Energies she discerned in the universe invariably showed that its arc bent toward Russia. She foretold glory for Vladimir Putin, defeat for Barack Obama and Petro Poroshenko. The point was to weave propaganda seamlessly into what appeared to be the nonpolitical musings of an everyday person.

In fact, she was a troll. The word "troll" was popularized in the early 1990s to denounce the people who derailed conversation on Usenet discussion lists with interminable flame wars, or spammed chat rooms with streams of disgusting photos, choking users with a cloud of filth. As the Internet has grown, the problem posed by trolls has grown more salient even as their tactics have remained remarkably constant. Today an ISIS supporter might adopt a pseudonym to harass a critical journalist on Twitter, or a right-wing agitator in the United States might smear demonstrations against police brutality by posing as a thieving, violent protester. Any major conflict is accompanied by a raging online battle between trolls on both sides. As Savchuk and other former employees describe it, the Internet Research Agency had industrialized the art of trolling. Management was obsessed with statistics — page views, number of posts, a blog's place on LiveJournal's traffic charts — and team leaders compelled hard work through a system of bonuses and fines. "It was a very strong corporate feeling," Savchuk says. Her schedule gave her two 12-hour days in a row, followed by two days off. Over those two shifts she had to meet a quota of five political posts, 10 nonpolitical posts and 150 to 200 comments on other workers' posts. The grueling schedule wore her down. She began to feel queasy, she said, posting vitriol about opposition leaders of whom she had no actual opinion, or writing nasty words about Ukrainians when some of her closest acquaintances, including her own ex-husband, were Ukrainian.

Employees were mostly in their 20s but were drawn from a broad cross-section of Russian society. It seemed as if the agency's task was so large that it would hire almost anyone who responded to the many ads it posted on job boards, no matter how undereducated or politically ignorant they were. Posts teemed with logical and grammatical errors. "They were so stupid," says Marat Burkhardt, who worked for two months in the department of forums, posting 135 comments a day on little-read message boards about remote Russian towns. "You see these people with a lot of tattoos. They're so cool, like they're from New York; very hip clothing, very hip tattoos, like they're from Williamsburg. But they are *stupid*." In office conversation, they used gay slurs to refer to Petro Poroshenko and called Barack Obama a monkey. Management tried to rectify their ignorance with grammar classes. Others had "politology" classes to outline the proper Russian point of view on current events. Yet the exact point of their work was left unclear to them. The handful of employees I spoke with did not even know the name of the company's chief executive. They had signed a nondisclosure agreement but no official contract. Salaries were surprisingly high for the work; Savchuk's was 41,000 rubles a month ($777), or as much as a tenured university professor earns. "I can't say they clearly explain to you what your purpose there is," Savchuk says. "But they created such an atmosphere that people would understand they were doing something important and secretive and very highly paid. And that they won't be able to find a job like this anywhere else."

Savchuk is 34, but her taste in clothes runs toward the teenage: The night of our dinner she wore a plaid dress and a billowing neon yellow jacket, and her head was swaddled in a fuzzy hood with animal ears. She credits her innocent appearance for allowing her to infiltrate the Internet Research Agency without raising alarms. While employed there, she copied dozens of documents to her personal email account and also plied her co-workers for information. She made a clandestine video of the office. In February, she leaked it all to a reporter for Moi Raion, a local newspaper known for its independent reporting. The documents, together with her story, offered the most detailed look yet into the daily life of a pro-Kremlin troll. Though she quit the agency the day the exposé was published, she was continuing her surveillance from the outside. She brought a camera to our dinner in hopes of documenting the changing of the shifts, which she planned to post to the VKontakte page of

Information Peace, the group she founded to fight the agency. Her ultimate goal is to shut it down entirely, believing that its information warfare is contributing to an increasingly dark atmosphere in Russia. "Information peace is the start of real peace," she says. But at 10 minutes after 9 p.m., still no crowd had entered or left 55 Savushkina. Finally, around 9:30, a group of five young people approached the building and walked inside. Savchuk perked up, grabbed the camera and began to film the scene. Now more started filtering in, each of them stopping at the guard desk to check in. I counted at least 30 in all. Savchuk told me with pride that she believed the agency had changed its schedule to confound journalists, who began to stake out the place after her exposé.

Savchuk is accustomed to antagonizing powerful people. She has been a longtime environmental activist in the town of Pushkin, the suburb of St. Petersburg where she lives; her main cause before the troll farm was saving forests and parks from being paved over by well-connected developers. Last year she even ran for a seat on her municipal council as an independent, which in Russia requires a level of optimism bordering on delusion. On Election Day, she told me, state employees — health care workers, teachers, law enforcement, etc. — came to the polls wielding lists of candidates they had been "encouraged" to vote for, all of them associated with United Russia, the governing party of Vladimir Putin. (She lost her race.) [Savchuk has filed a lawsuit](#) against the Internet Research Agency for violating labor rights laws, citing the lack of official contracts. She has enlisted the help of a well-known human rights lawyer named Ivan Pavlov, who has spent years fighting for transparency laws in Russia; he took on Savchuk's case in hopes that it would force the agency to answer questions about its business on the record. Several Russian media outlets have claimed that the agency is funded by Evgeny Prigozhin, an oligarch restaurateur called "the Kremlin's chef" in the independent press for his lucrative government contracts and his close relationship with Putin. When a reporter from the opposition paper Novaya Gazeta infiltrated the agency posing as a job seeker, she discovered that one of the team leaders was an employee of Prigozhin's Concord holding company. (The reporter was familiar with her because the woman was famous among journalists for having been deployed by Prigozhin to spy on Novaya Gazeta.) The suspicion around Prigozhin was bolstered when emails leaked by hackers showed an accountant at Concord approving payments to the agency. If the speculation is accurate, it would not be the first time that Prigozhin has used his enormous wealth to fund quixotic schemes against his enemies: According to Novaya Gazeta, a documentary he backed, which later ran on the Kremlin-controlled NTV, claimed that the protesters who participated in the enormous anti-Putin demonstrations of 2011 were paid agents provocateurs, some of them bribed by United States government officials, who fed them cookies. "I think of him as Dr. Evil," says Andrei Soshnikov, the reporter at Moi Raion to whom Savchuk leaked her documents. (My calls to Concord went unreturned.)

Savchuk's revelations about the agency have fascinated Russia not because they are shocking but because they confirm what everyone has long suspected: The Russian Internet is awash in trolls. "This troll business becomes more popular year by year," says Platon Mamatov, who says that he ran his own troll farm in the Ural Mountains from 2008 to 2013. During that time he employed from 20 to 40 people, mostly students and young mothers, to carry out online tasks for Kremlin contacts and local and regional authorities from Putin's United Russia party. Mamatov says there are scores of operations like his around the country, working for government authorities at every level. Because the industry is secretive, with its funds funneled through a maze of innocuous-sounding contracts and shell businesses,

it is difficult to estimate exactly how many people are at work trolling today. But Mamatov claims "there are thousands — I'm not sure about how many, but yes, really, thousands."

The boom in pro-Kremlin trolling can be traced to the antigovernment protests of 2011, when tens of thousands of people took to the streets after evidence of fraud in the recent Parliamentary election emerged. The protests were organized largely over Facebook and Twitter and spearheaded by leaders, like the anticorruption crusader Alexei Navalny, who used LiveJournal blogs to mobilize support. The following year, when Vyascheslav Volodin, the new deputy head of Putin's administration and architect of his domestic policy, came into office, one of his main tasks was to rein in the Internet. Volodin, a lawyer who studied engineering in college, approached the problem as if it were a design flaw in a heating system. Forbes Russia reported that Volodin installed in his office a custom-designed computer terminal loaded with a system called Prism, which monitored public sentiment online using 60 million sources. According to the website of its manufacturer, Prism "actively tracks the social media activities that result in increased social tension, disorderly conduct, protest sentiments and extremism." Or, as Forbes put it, "Prism sees social media as a battlefield."

Photo

Ludmila Savchuk, an activist and a former mole in the Internet Research Agency. Credit James Hill for The New York Times

The battle was conducted on multiple fronts. Laws were passed requiring bloggers to register with the state. A blacklist allowed the government to censor websites without a court order. Internet platforms like Yandex were subjected to political pressure, while others, like VKontakte, were brought under the control of Kremlin allies. Putin gave ideological cover to the crackdown by calling the entire Internet a "C.I.A. project," one that Russia needed to be protected from. Restrictions online were paired with a new wave of digital propaganda. The government consulted with the same public relations firms that worked with major corporate brands on social-media strategy. It began paying fashion and fitness bloggers to place pro-Kremlin material among innocuous posts about shoes and diets, according to Yelizaveta Surnacheva, a journalist with the magazine Kommersant Vlast. Surnacheva told me over Skype that the government was even trying to place propaganda with popular gay bloggers — a surprising choice given the notorious new law against "gay propaganda," which fines anyone who promotes homosexuality to minors.

All of this has contributed to a dawning sense, among the Russian journalists and activists I spoke with, that the Internet is no longer a natural medium for political opposition. "The myth that the Internet is controlled by the opposition is very, very old," says Leonid Volkov, a liberal politician and campaign

manager to Alexei Navalny. "It's not true since at least three years." Part of this is simple demographics: The Internet audience has expanded from its early adopters, who were more likely to be well-educated liberal intelligentsia, to the whole of Russia, which overwhelmingly supports Putin. Also, by working every day to spread Kremlin propaganda, the paid trolls have made it impossible for the normal Internet user to separate truth from fiction.

"The point is to spoil it, to create the atmosphere of hate, to make it so stinky that normal people won't want to touch it," Volkov said, when we met in the office of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation. "You have to remember the Internet population of Russia is just over 50 percent. The rest are yet to join, and when they join it's very important what is their first impression." The Internet still remains the one medium where the opposition can reliably get its message out. But their message is now surrounded by so much garbage from trolls that readers can become resistant before the message even gets to them. During the protests, a favorite tactic of the opposition was making anti-Putin hashtags trend on Twitter. Today, waves of trolls and bots regularly promote pro-Putin hashtags. What once was an exhilarating act of popular defiance now feels empty. "It kind of discredited the idea of political hashtags," says Ilya Klishin, the web editor for the independent television station TV Rain who, in 2011, created the Facebook page for the antigovernment protests.

Russia's information war might be thought of as the biggest trolling operation in history, and its target is nothing less than the utility of the Internet as a democratic space. In the midst of such a war, the Runet (as the Russian Internet is often called) can be an unpleasant place for anyone caught in the crossfire. Soon after I met Leonid Volkov, he wrote a post on his Facebook wall about our interview, saying that he had spoken with someone from The New York Times. A former pro-Kremlin blogger later warned me about this. Kremlin allies, he explained, monitored Volkov's page, and now they would be on guard. "That was not smart," he said. **The chain that links** the Columbian Chemicals hoax to the Internet Research Agency begins with an act of digital subterfuge perpetrated by its online enemies. Last summer, a group called [Anonymous International](#) — believed to be unaffiliated with the well-known hacktivist group Anonymous — published a cache of hundreds of emails said to have been stolen from employees at the agency. It was just one hack in a long series that Anonymous International had carried out against the Kremlin in recent months. The group leaked embarrassing photos of Putin allies and incriminating emails among officials. It claimed to have [hacked into Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev's phone](#), and reportedly hacked his Twitter account, tweeting: "I'm resigning. I am ashamed of this government's actions. Forgive me."

The emails indicated that the Internet Research Agency had begun to troll in English. One document outlined a project called "World Translation"; the problem, it explained, was that the foreign Internet was biased four to one against Russia, and the project aimed to change the ratio. Another email contained a spreadsheet that listed some of the troll accounts the agency was using on the English-language web. After BuzzFeed reported on the leak, I used the spreadsheet to start mapping the network of accounts on Facebook and Twitter, trying to draw connections. One account was called "I Am Ass." Ass had a Twitter account, an Instagram account, multiple [Facebook accounts](#) and his own website. In his avatars, Ass was depicted as a pair of cartoon buttocks with an ugly, smirking face. He filled his social-media presences with links to news articles, along with his own commentary. Ass had a puerile sense of humor and only a rudimentary grasp of the English language. He also really hated

Barack Obama. Ass denounced Obama in posts strewn with all-caps rants and scatological puns. One characteristic post linked to a news article about an ISIS massacre in Iraq, which Ass shared on Facebook with the comment: "I'm scared and farting! ISIS is a monster awakened by Obama when he unleashed this disastrous Iraq war!" Despite his unpleasant disposition, Ass had a half-dozen or so fans who regularly liked and commented on his posts. These fans shared some unusual characteristics. Their Facebook accounts had all been created in the summer of 2014. They all appeared to be well-dressed young men and women who lived in large American cities, yet they seemed to have no real-life friends. Instead, they spent their free time leaving anti-Obama comments on the Facebook posts of American media outlets like CNN, Politico and Fox News. Their main Facebook interactions, especially those of the women, appeared to be with strangers who commented on their physical appearance. The women were all very attractive — so attractive, indeed, that a search revealed that some of their profile photos had been stolen from models and actors. It became clear that the vast majority of Ass's fans were not real people. They were also trolls.

I friended as many of the trolls on Facebook as I could and began to observe their ways. Most of the content they shared was drawn from a network of other pages that, like Ass's, were clearly meant to produce entertaining and shareable social-media content. There was the patriotic [Spread Your Wings](#), which described itself as "a community for everyone whose heart is with America." Spread Your Wings posted photos of American flags and memes about how great it was to be an American, but the patriotism rang hollow once you tried to parse the frequent criticisms of Obama, an incoherent mishmash of liberal and conservative attacks that no actual American would espouse. There was also [Art Gone Conscious](#), which posted bad art and then tenuously connected it to Obama's policy failures, and the self-explanatory [Celebrities Against Obama](#). The posts churned out every day by this network of pages were commented on and shared by the same group of trolls, a virtual Potemkin village of disaffected Americans. After following the accounts for a few weeks, I saw a strange notification on Facebook. One account, which claimed to be a woman from Seattle named Polly Turner, RSVPed to a real-life event. It was a talk in New York City to commemorate the opening of an art exhibit called Material Evidence. I was vaguely aware of Material Evidence, thanks to eye-catching advertisements that had appeared in subway stations and on the sides of buses throughout New York City: a black-and-white photo of masked men in camouflage, overlaid with the slogan "Syria, Ukraine … Who's Next?" Material Evidence's website described it as a traveling exhibition that would reveal "the full truth" about the civil war in Syria, as well as about 2014's Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine, through a combination of "unique footage, artefacts, video." I clicked on the Material Evidence talk and saw that a number of other trolls had been invited, including my old friend I Am Ass.

Walking into Material Evidence, [mounted last September](#) in the cavernous ArtBeam gallery in Chelsea, was like walking into a real-life version of the hall of mirrors I'd stumbled into on Facebook. A sign at the front declared that the show did not "support a specific political goal," but the message became clear as soon as I began to browse the images. Large, well-composed photos testified to the barbarity of the Syrian rebels, bent on slaughtering handsome Syrian soldiers and innocent civilians alike. A grim panorama showed a gymnasium supposedly used by rebels to torture prisoners. There was a heroic, sunlit portrait of a Syrian Army officer. A room hidden behind a curtain displayed gory photos of rebel-caused civilian causalities, "provided by the Syrian ministry of defense."

Then there were the pictures from the Ukrainian revolution, which focused almost exclusively on the Right Sector, a small group of violent, right-wing, anti-Russian protesters with a fondness for black balaclavas. Russian authorities have seized upon Right Sector to paint the entire revolution, backed by a huge swath of Ukrainian society, as orchestrated by neo-fascist thugs. The show's decision to juxtapose the rebellions in Syria and Ukraine was never clearly explained, perhaps because the only connection possible was that both targeted leaders supported by Russia.

On the floor in front of many of the photos sat the actual items that appeared in them, displayed under glass cases. How, exactly, did organizers procure the very same battered motorcycle helmet that a Ukrainian protester wore in a photo while brawling with riot police? Who had fronted the money to purchase a mangled white van, supposedly used by Syrian rebels in a botched suicide bombing, and transport it to New York City? Few answers were forthcoming from Benjamin Hiller, the Berlin-based German-American photojournalist who was put forth as the curator of Material Evidence. He sat at a table in the front of the gallery, a heavyset bearded man dressed entirely in black. He told me that the show had been organized by an independent collective of European, Russian and Syrian war photographers who were fed up with the one-sided view of conflicts presented by Western media. He said they simply wanted to show the "other side." Hiller claimed that the funds to rent the space, take out the ads, transport the material and create a $40,000 grant advertised on the Material Evidence website had been raised through "crowdfunding." (Hiller has since left the organization and says that because of the show's "misinformations" and "nonjournalistic approach," he "does not want to be affiliated anymore with the project.")

When I got home, I searched Twitter for signs of a campaign. Sure enough, dozens of accounts had been spamming rave reviews under the hashtag #MaterialEvidence. I clicked on one, a young woman in aviator sunglasses calling herself Zoe Foreman. (I later discovered her avatar had been stolen.) Most of her tweets were unremarkable song lyrics and inspirational quotes. But on Sept. 11 of last year, she spent hours spamming politicians and journalists about a horrific chemical plant explosion in St. Mary Parish, La. The source field on Twitter showed that the tweets Zoe Foreman — and the majority of other trolls — sent about #ColumbianChemicals were posted using a tool called Masss Post, which is associated with a nonworking page on the domain Add1.ru. According to online records, Add1.ru was originally registered in January 2009 by Mikhail Burchik, whose email address remained connected to the domain until 2012. Documents leaked by Anonymous International listed a Mikhail Burchik as the executive director of the Internet Research Agency.

In early February, I called Burchik, a young tech entrepreneur in St. Petersburg, to ask him about the hoax and its connection to the Internet Research Agency. In an article for the newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung, the German journalist Julian Hans had claimed that Burchik confirmed the authenticity of the leaked documents. But when I called Burchik, he denied working at the Internet Research Agency. "I have heard of it, but I don't work in this organization," he said. Burchik said he had never heard of the Masss Post app; he had no specific memory of the Add1.ru domain, he said, but he noted that he had bought and sold many domains and didn't remember them all. Burchik suggested that perhaps a different Mikhail Burchik was the agency's executive director. But the email address used by the Mikhail Burchik in the leak matched the address listed at that time on the website of the Mikhail Burchik I spoke with.

In St. Petersburg, I finally had a chance to compare notes with Andrei Soshnikov, the young investigative journalist at Moi Raion to whom Ludmila Savchuk leaked [her documents](#). Soshnikov is an indefatigable reporter: During one investigation, he had gone so far as to create a 3-D computer model of a roadway in order to calculate how much asphalt had been stolen during its construction. He was one of the first journalists to expose the Internet Research Agency when he went undercover and got a job there in 2013. Since then, he had followed the agency's Russian trolls as obsessively as I had been tracking their English counterparts. I showed Soshnikov a [YouTube video](#) posted on Facebook by one of the trolls. The video was a slick animated infographic about the faults of the United States Secret Service. What had caught my attention was the narrator. He sounded just like the voice from the videos spread during the Columbian Chemicals and Atlanta shooting hoaxes: a man trying desperately to sound American but coming off as Australian instead.

Soshnikov instantly recognized the style of the animation. It was made, he said, by an outfit called Infosurfing, which posts pro-Kremlin infographics on Instagram and VKontakte. Soshnikov showed me how he used a service called Yomapic, which maps the locations of social-media users, to determine that photos posted to Infosurfing's Instagram account came from 55 Savushkina. He had been monitoring all of the content posted from 55 Savushkina for weeks and had assembled a huge database of troll content. He brought up Infosurfing's YouTube channel, and as we scrolled down, I noticed several videos in the same style as the Secret Service animation. In fact, Infosurfing had posted the exact same video on its own account — except instead of the unfortunate Australian voice-over, it was narrated in Russian. It was the most tantalizing connection yet: It seemed as if the man in the hoax videos had worked for an outfit connected to the same building that housed the Internet Research Agency.

Still, no one had heard of any department that might have orchestrated the hoax. The English-language trolling team was an elite and secretive group. Marat Burkhardt, who worked in the forums department, was asked to try out for an English-language team but didn't get the job. The only person I spoke with who worked in the English department was a woman named Katarina Aistova. A former hotel receptionist, she told me she joined the Internet Research Agency when it was in a previous, smaller office. I found her through the Anonymous International leak, which included emails she had sent to her bosses, reporting on the pro-Putin comments she left on sites like The Blaze and Politico. One of her assignments had been to write an essay from the point of view of an average American woman. "I live in such developed society, so that people have practically ceased to walk on foot," she wrote. When I emailed Aistova, she wasn't eager to talk. She told me she had been harassed by critics of the Internet Research Agency after her email appeared in the leak; some men had even come to her door. She would meet me for an interview, but only if she could bring her brother for protection. I agreed, and we met at an out-of-the-way Chinese restaurant. The exact point of their work was left unclear to them. The handful of employees I spoke with did not even know the name of the company's chief executive.

Aistova and her brother made an unusual pair. She was a short young woman with midlength brown hair, dressed all in black: sweater, leggings, big wedge boots. She insisted on paying for my coffee. "You are a Russian guest," she said. He, by contrast, was a hulking skinhead with arms full of Nazi-themed tattoos, most prominent among them a five-inch swastika on his left biceps. "My brother, he

looks like a strongman," Aistova said, giggling. He wore a black T-shirt emblazoned with the skull-and-crossbones insignia of the SS Totenkopf division, which administered the Nazi concentration camps. I asked him what his T-shirt meant. "Totenkopf," he grunted. During the interview he sat across the table from Aistova and me, smiling silently behind his sunglasses. Aistova said that she worked for the Internet Research Agency for a month and a half. The majority of her work was translating news articles from English to Russian. The news articles covered everything from Ukraine to traffic accidents. On a few occasions, her bosses asked her to leave comments on American news sites about Russia, but she said that they never told her what to say. She loves Russia, she told me. She truly believes that Putin is just trying to help the people of Eastern Ukraine, and that his actions are being unfairly spun by the Western media. "I was like, Hey, you guys, you are saying these bad things about Putin, but people are suffering."

But she claimed to harbor no ill will toward the United States. She wants to visit New York City, she said, and see the locations from "Breakfast at Tiffany's," one of her favorite films. "I don't feel aggressive toward America. We're the same people, we just speak different languages," she said. After the interview, we shook hands outside the restaurant. "You seem like a journalist who will tell the truth," she said. "I wish you luck on your story." **On my last morning** in St. Petersburg, I returned to 55 Savushkina. The clouds had lifted after a miserable week of snow and howling wind. At a few minutes before 10, my translator and I positioned ourselves on the sidewalk in front of the entrance, hoping to catch some of the trolls as they began the day shift. This was not a very well thought out strategy. Any employees arriving so close to the start of their shift didn't have time to talk to a journalist even if they wanted to. A large van lurched to a halt in front of us and deposited a half-dozen young people, who hurried in the door before we had the chance to approach them. A bus stopped halfway down the block, and another gaggle of workers emerged. They waved off my translator's inquiries with annoyed grunts or stone-faced silence. A young man smoking a cigarette said he didn't work inside the building. He finished his cigarette and promptly went inside the building.

At 10 a.m. sharp, the flow of workers stopped. I decided we might as well try walking inside. I had read of other journalists who tried to enter the building, only to be kicked out immediately, so I entered with some trepidation. Two men in suits guarded the turnstiles. My translator and I approached a receptionist behind a desk and asked if we could speak with someone from Internet Research. (It dropped the "Agency" on moving to 55 Savushkina.) She informed us that Internet Research was no longer a tenant. "A couple of months ago, we had to say goodbye, because it was giving the entire building a bad reputation," she said, matter-of-factly.

She pointed to a board that displayed a makeshift directory of the building's current occupants. The names were printed out on small scraps of paper, and none of them were Internet Research. But I did recognize one: "FAN," or Federal News Agency. I had read some news articles claiming that FAN was part of a network of pro-Kremlin news sites run out of 55 Savushkina, also funded by Evgeny Prigozhin. Former Internet Research Agency employees I had spoken to said they believed FAN was another wing of the same operation, under a different name. I asked to speak to someone from FAN. To my surprise, the receptionist picked up the phone, spoke into it for a few seconds and then informed us that Evgeny Zubarev, the editor in chief of FAN, would be right out to meet us.

Zubarev, who looked to be in his 50s, had close-cropped salt-and-pepper hair and a weary face. He greeted me with a handshake and invited me into his office. We made our way through the turnstiles and signed in with the guards, then took a brief walk down a long hallway to FAN's two-room office on the first floor. It was unusually quiet for an online news operation that, according to Zubarev, had a staff of 40 people. The newsroom was equipped for a sizable team, with about a dozen identical black desktop computers sitting on identical brown laminate desks, but only two young reporters sat at them. The shades were drawn and the furniture looked just barely unpacked.

As we sat at Zubarev's desk, I told him about the articles I'd read accusing FAN of being a Kremlin propaganda outfit. He shook his head in indignation. He turned to his computer and brought up FAN's website, pointing to the masthead and the certificate number that showed FAN was an officially registered Russian mass-media organization. "FAN is a news agency," he declared. It had stringers and reporters in Ukraine, and in many former Soviet states; they did original reporting, sometimes at great personal risk. Zubarev himself was a veteran journalist who covered the annexation of Crimea for the Russian news agency Rosbalt before joining FAN. But ever since reports linked him to the Internet Research Agency, he had faced questions about his integrity. "We understand being in this building may discredit us, but we can't afford to move at the moment," Zubarev said with a sigh. "So we have to face the situation where reporters like you, Mr. Chen, come in here and ask us questions every day."

Zubarev said he believed that he and FAN were victims of a smear campaign. I asked him who would do such a thing. "Listen, that's my position, not a confirmed fact," he said. "It's possible that there are some business interests, I don't know. Maybe it's an attack on our investors." But when I asked who those investors were, he declined to comment. "I can't discuss the identities of investors," he said. "That's in my contract."

I left St. Petersburg on April 28. One day later, [FAN published an article](#) with the headline "What Does a New York Times Journalist Have in Common With a Nazi From St. Petersburg?" The story detailed a mysterious meeting in St. Petersburg between a New York Times journalist — me — and a neo-Nazi. Its lead image was a photo of a skinhead giving an enthusiastic Nazi salute. But it was not just any skinhead. It was the skinhead whom Katarina Aistova brought to our meeting and introduced to me as her brother. As I learned from reading the article, Aistova's "brother" was in fact a notorious neo-Nazi named Alexei Maximov.

The article explained that Maximov, who goes by the nickname Fly, is a member of Totenkopf, a prominent skinhead group in St. Petersburg. He reportedly served nine years in prison for stabbing a man to death. Just a month before I met him, Maximov again made headlines when, during an investigation into beatings of immigrants around St. Petersburg, the police found weaponry and Nazi paraphernalia in his apartment. The story made no mention of Katarina Aistova or the Internet Research Agency. Instead, the article claimed I met with Maximov because I wanted his help in creating a provocation against Russia. Maximov told FAN that I requested to meet him because I was "very keenly interested in sentiment among Russian nationalists." He continued: "He evidently needed stories about how the murderous Kremlin regime persecutes free Russian people. It's not the first time I've come across such requests on the part of Western journalists, but I'm not going to help them with this.

Many want to see in Russian nationalists a 'fifth column,' which will function on orders from the West and sweep away the Kremlin." Apparently I was trying to foment a mini-Euromaidan, right there in St. Petersburg. The article was illustrated with photos of my meeting with Aistova and Maximov. One photo appears to have been shot surreptitiously through the restaurant window while we sat and talked. The point of view is such that Aistova is barely visible; indeed, at first glance, I seem to be having a friendly chat with a skinhead over a cup of coffee. Another photo, this one taken outside the restaurant, somehow makes me look deep in conversation with Maximov, even though I distinctly recall that Aistova was standing between us.

I had to admire the brazenness of the scheme. I remembered how, at the restaurant, Aistova had sat next to me so I had to twist around to talk to her, while Maximov sat silently across from us. Apparently they had arranged themselves so it could appear, from the right perspective, that I was meeting Maximov alone. I emailed Aistova to ask her to explain what happened. She responded only: "I would also like you to explain yourself and the situation!!" (A few weeks later, when I tried calling her by phone, she pretended I had the wrong number.)

Over the course of a few days, the sensational story circulated among a network of small pro-Kremlin blogs. In fact, the FAN story itself had been aggregated from another pro-Kremlin news site called People's News, which Andrei Soshnikov, the Moi Raion journalist, has reported also operates out of 55 Savushkina. As it spread, it mutated to become even more alarming. One website suggested I was working for the C.I.A.; another, the National Security Agency. A YouTube channel called Russia Today — not the well-known state television channel but a knockoff — posted a [slick video about the meeting](#), set to a pounding dubstep soundtrack. Disconcertingly, it included a photo of me leaving my hotel. The video currently has more than 60,000 views. Many of those views were a result of a familiar pattern of social-media promotion: Dozens of trolls on Twitter began tweeting links to the video [using the hashtag #ВербовкаНацистов](#) — "Recruitment of Nazis." The hashtag trended on Russian Twitter.

After recovering from the initial shock, I began to track the campaign against me. I had practice, after all, from my months spent on the trail of the Internet Research Agency. I Googled the various Russian spellings of my name every hour to catch the latest posts as soon as they surfaced on LiveJournal and VKontakte. I searched Twitter for the URL of the YouTube video to catch every post. A few days later, Soshnikov chatted with me on Skype. "Did you see an article about you on FAN?" he asked. "They know you are going to publish a loud article, so they are trying to make you look stupid in front of the Russian audience." I explained the setup, and as I did I began to feel a nagging paranoia. The more I explained, the more absurd my own words seemed — the more they seemed like exactly the sort of elaborate alibi a C.I.A. agent might concoct once his cover was blown. The trolls had done the only thing they knew how to do, but this time they had done it well. They had gotten into my head.

Correction: June 21, 2015

An article on June 7 about Russian Internet ''trolls'' referred incorrectly to the Internet platform Yandex. It was subjected to political pressure, but it was not brought under the control of Kremlin allies. Adrian Chen is a New York-based writer whose work has appeared in Wired, New York magazine, and The New York Times. He is a contributing editor for The New Inquiry and a founder of

I.R.L. Club, a regular gathering for people from the Internet to meet "in real life." A version of this article appears in print on June 7, 2015, on page MM57 of the Sunday Magazine with the headline: The Agency.

White House Politicos Caught Paying Internet 'Trolls' to Attack Activists – Is Google providing the "attack engine"?

Companies desperate to fool public
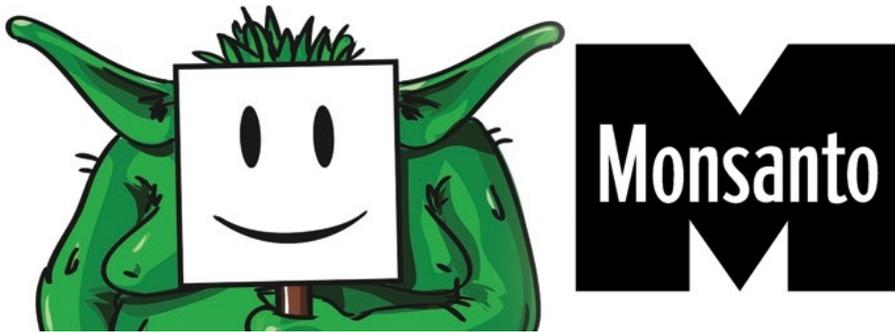
BY **ANTHONY GUCCIARDI**

Have you ever seen a post, comment, or reply that absolutely reeked of behind-the-scenes compensation by corporations like Monsanto? In the growing age of internet activism, and the expansion of social media as a tool to spread the word on real issues, **paid internet trolling is becoming a new career path.**

Now, in case you're not familiar with what 'trolling' really is, I think Wikipedia has a great definition. According to Wikipedia, an internet troll is:

"…a person who sows discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community (such as a newsgroup, forum, chat room, or blog) with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion."

Does this sound like some posts you've seen before? Now, let's be clear: there are tons of internet trolls out there that are absolutely not on the pay roll. Most of these people are genuinely just messing with others to get a laugh, a reaction, or whatever. Not *arguing on behalf of multi-billion dollar corporations* for up to 8 hours per day.

There's the real difference. And, besides common sense dictating that corporations would surely hire a fleet of internet warriors to protect their brand reputation in the age of open source online communication, we now know for sure that companies like Monsanto have in fact dedicated 'entire departments' to trolling scientists and 'discrediting' those who oppose their GMO creations.

Monsanto Paying Fleet of Trolls to 'Discredit'

Surprisingly, it was actually a Monsanto employee that unintentionally let the truth behind their 'discrediting operation' slip in a conference with students that he may have forgotten was open to the public. In a conversation with students, Dr. William "Bill" Moar raved that Monsanto had established:

"An entire department" (waving his arm for emphasis) dedicated to "debunking" science which disagreed with theirs."
That's huge news. We told you about this first back on the 6th of April — but I am absolutely shocked how it has not been covered to the extent it should have. Because, after all, how does a company 'discredit' and 'debunk' those who go against their destructive, cancer-linked products? By attacking them online through blogs, comments, and character assassination. In other words, **by internet trolling**.

It's so much easier to say someone is a 'quack,' or create some fictitious and anonymous accusation to plague their search data than it is to actually have a scientific debate on issues like Roundup's admitted probable carcinogenic nature.

It also brings into question whether or not the Monsanto employee truly did 'slip up' or if he was attempting to help get the word out about the corporation he represents. You have to wonder if Dr. Moar was secretly passing off some information to the press in the form of a slip about his company.

This is a question I often wondered after hearing about Coca-Cola's similar operations that extended deeper than just internet trolls. After reading the March 16th article in the Associated Press that broke down how Coca-Cola paid off health leaders in exchange for these 'experts' to back their chemical-laden sodas as health drinks.

The AP report reads:

"In February, several of the experts wrote online posts for American Heart Month, with each including a mini-can of Coke or soda as a snack idea. The pieces — which appeared on nutrition blogs and other sites including those of major newspapers — offer a window into the many ways food companies work behind the scenes to cast their products in a positive light, often with the help of third parties who are seen as trusted authorities." A mini-can of Coke as a 'snack idea.' What amazing health leaders these individuals truly are. Next time you're scrolling through social media, YouTube, or even this website's comment section, remember that the trolls attacking you for no apparent reason may in fact be receiving an annual salary. Checkout my video report on Monsanto's secret 'discrediting' department and what it truly means for the natural health and alternative news movement:

How Google was "Weaponized" to take down anyone who doesn't agree with The Silicon Valley Cartel

By Robert Engles

Google is used to consciously, maliciously and in a manually implemented manner, attack defame and economically damage competitors. The test metrics prove it. The witness testimony proves it. The EU evidence proves it and the 5 year long test analytic studies prove it. Google engages in intentional, and malicious attacks. Eric Schmidt, Elon Musk, John Doerr, Steve Jurvetson, and their associates, are campaign financiers, fixated on crafting the world into their egotistical, arrogant billionaire-skewed vision of "how things should be". Few, if any, voters, and normal American's, share their "vision". Silicon Valley holds the U.S. record for producing more news coverage about intern rapes, institutionalized misogyny, the refusal to hire blacks or women, "White Boy Frat House discriminationclubs", start-up collusion (see "Angelgate" and "No Poaching Conspiracy" news coverage), Hooker murders, Escort clubs, "sex Islands", trophy wives and wife-slavery, Flash Boy stock market manipulation, and other horrific social ills. Almost every Silicon Valley VC has now been discovered to have come from one of the fraternity houses now charged, in the media, as "rape factories". This Cartel does not seem to be qualified to be making decisions on behalf of society, yet, here they are, controlling what the public sees on the internet. Internet experts were tasked with figuring out how it was done and how Google's associate: Elon Musk, got every negative article about him hidden by Google. Here is what they discovered. This proves that "Google Manipulates The Internet For Elections And Stock Market Results For Its Investors" Technical testing arrays were built, by numerous groups. They tested all of Google's results for years. The results prove that "mood manipulation" technology is intentionally used and operated by Google management. Google is accused of running Stasi mind experiments on the public without their knowledge or consent.

Google's Internet search engines may be influencing elections

By David Shultz

" What we're talking about here is a means of mind control on a massive scale that there is no precedent for in human history." That may sound hyperbolic, but Robert Epstein says it's not an exaggeration. Epstein, a research psychologist at the American Institute for Behavioral Research in Vista, California, has found that the higher a politician ranks on a page of Internet search results, the more

likely you are to vote for them. " I have a lot of faith in the methods they've used, and I think it's a very rigorously conducted study," says Nicholas Diakopoulos, a computer scientist at the University of Maryland, College Park, who was not involved in the research. "I don't think that they've overstated their claims." In their first experiment, Epstein and colleagues recruited three groups of 102 volunteers in San Diego, California, who were generally representative of the U.S. voting population in terms of age, race, political affiliation, and other traits. The researchers wanted to know if they could influence who the Californians would have voted for in the 2010 election ... for prime minister of Australia. So they built a fake search engine called Kadoodle that returned a list of 30 websites for the finalist candidates, 15 for Tony Abbott and 15 for Julia Gillard. Most of the Californians knew little about either candidate before the test began, so the experiment was their only real exposure to Australian politics. What they didn't know was that the search engine had been rigged to display the results in an order biased toward one candidate or the other. For example, in the most extreme scenario, a subject would see 15 webpages with information about Gillard's platform and objectives followed by 15 similar results for Abbott.

As predicted, subjects spent far more time reading Web pages near the top of the list. But what surprised researchers was the difference those rankings made: Biased search results increased the number of undecided voters choosing the favored candidate by 48% compared with a control group that saw an equal mix of both candidates throughout the list. Very few subjects noticed they were being manipulated, but those who did were actually more likely to vote in line with the biased results. "We expect the search engine to be making wise choices," Epstein says. "What they're saying is, 'Well yes, I see the bias and that's telling me ... the search engine is doing its job.'"

In a second experiment, the scientists repeated the first test on 2100 participants recruited online through Amazon's labor crowdsourcing site Mechanical Turk. The subjects were also chosen to be representative of the U.S. voting population. The large sample size—and additional details provided by users—allowed the researchers to pinpoint which demographics were most vulnerable to search engine manipulation: Divorcees, Republicans, and subjects who reported low familiarity with the candidates were among the easiest groups to influence, whereas participants who were better informed, married, or reported an annual household income between $40,000 and $50,000 were harder to sway. Moderate Republicans were the most susceptible of any group: The manipulated search results increased the number of undecided voters who said they would choose the favored candidate by 80%.

" In a two person race, a candidate can only count on getting half of the uncommitted votes, which is worthless. With the help of biased search rankings,a candidate might be able to get 90% of the uncommitted votes [in select demographics]," Epstein explains.In a third experiment, the team tested its hypothesis in a real, ongoing election: the 2014 general election in India. After recruiting a sample of 2150 undecided Indian voters, the researchers repeated the original experiment, replacing the Australian candidates with the three Indian politicians who were actually running at the time. The results of the real world trial were slightly less dramatic—an outcome that researchers attribute to voters' higher familiarity with the candidates. But merely changing which candidate appeared higher in the results still increased the number of undecided Indian voters who would vote for that candidate by 12% or more compared with controls. And once again, awareness of the manipulation enhanced the

effect. A few percentage points here and there may seem meager, but the authors point out that elections are often won by margins smaller than 1%. If 80% of eligible voters have Internet access and 10% of them are undecided, the search engine effect could convince an additional 25% of those undecided to vote for a target candidate, the team reports online this week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. That type of swing would determine the election outcome, as long as the expected win margin was 2% or less. "This is a huge effect," Epstein says. "It's so big that it's quite dangerous." But perhaps the most concerning aspect of the findings is that a search engine doesn't even have to intentionally manipulate the order of results for this effect to manifest. Organic search algorithms already in place naturally put one candidate's name higher on the list than others. This is based on factors like "relevance" and "credibility" (terms that are closely guarded by developers at Google and other major search engines). So the public is already being influenced by the search engine manipulation effect, Epstein says. "Without any intervention by anyone working at Google, it means that Google's algorithm has been determining the outcome of close elections around the world."

He also points out that the Internet mogul will benefit more from certain election outcomes than others. And according to Epstein, Google is very aware both of the power it wields, as well as the research his team is doing: When the team recruited volunteers from the Internet in the second experiment, two of the IP addresses came from Google's head office, he says. " It's easy to point the finger at the algorithm because it's this supposedly inert thing, but there are a lot of people behind the algorithm," Diakopoulos says. "I think that it does pose a threat to the legitimacy of the democracy that we have.

We desperately need to have a public conversation about the role of these systems in the democratic processes."

Posted in Brain & Behavior, Technology

PSYCHOLOGIST'S TRICKS USED BY GOOGLE TO CONTROL THE PUBLIC AND DESTROY OPPONENTS

By Andrew Fishman

JTRIG's operations have been referred to as "dirty tricks," and Dhami's paper notes that the unit's own staff characterize their work using "terms such as 'discredit,' promote 'distrust,' 'dissuade,''deceive,' 'disrupt,' 'delay,' 'deny,''denigrate/degrade,' and 'deter.'" The unit's targets go beyond terrorists and foreign militaries and include groups considered "domestic extremist[s]," criminals, online "hacktivists," and even "entire countries." After publishing Dhami's paper for the first time in June,

The Intercept reached out to several of her fellow psychologists, including some whose work was referenced in the paper, about the document's ethical implications. One of the psychologists cited in the report criticized the paper and GCHQ's ethics. Another psychologist condemned Dhami's recommendations as "grossly unethical" and another called them an "egregious violation" of psychological ethics. But two other psychologists cited in the report did not express concern when contacted for reaction, and another psychologist, along with Dhami's current employer, defended her work and her ethical standards. A British law firm hired to represent Dhami maintained that any allegations of unethical conduct are "grossly defamatory and totally untrue."The divergent views on the paper highlight how the profession of psychology has yet to resolve key ethical concerns around consulting for government intelligence agencies. These issues take on added resonance in the context of the uproar currently roiling the American Psychological Association over the key role it played in the CIA torture program during the Bush administration. The APA's Council of Representatives voted Friday to bar psychologists from taking part in national security interrogations or to advise on confinement conditions. Dhami's consultation with JTRIG and the APA's role in support of the CIA torture program are disparate — there is no suggestion that Dhami advised on interrogations involving torture nor that her paper was part of an ongoing relationship with JTRIG — but Dhami's GCHQ work, like the APA scandal, provokes heated disagreement and criticism."

(Ed Note: The top-secret document, titled "Behavioural Science Support for JTRIG's (Joint Threat Research and Intelligence Group's) Effects and Online HUMINT Operations," appears to have been written during this stint at the spy agency and is now known to be in the hands of Google planning executives at Google headquarters in Mountain View, California according to Google staff whistle-blowers. They state that these procedures are in use against the political enemies of Google's executives and venture capitalists)

2.5 *Operation methods/techniques.* All of JTRIG's operations are conducted using cyber technology. Staff described a range of methods/techniques that have been used to-date for conducting effects operations. These included:

- Uploading YouTube videos containing "persuasive" communications (to discredit, promote distrust, dissuade, deter, delay or disrupt)
- Setting up Facebook groups, forums, blogs and Twitter accounts that encourage and monitor discussion on a topic (to discredit, promote distrust, dissuade, deter, delay or disrupt)
- Establishing online aliases/personalities who support the communications or messages in YouTube videos, Facebook groups, forums, blogs etc
- Establishing online aliases/personalities who support other aliases
- Sending spoof e-mails and text messages from a fake person or mimicking a real person (to discredit, promote distrust, dissuade, deceive, deter, delay or disrupt)
- Providing spoof online resources such as magazines and books that provide inaccurate information (to disrupt, delay, deceive, discredit, promote distrust, dissuade, deter or denigrate/degrade)
- Providing online access to uncensored material (to disrupt)
- Sending instant messages to specific individuals giving them instructions for accessing uncensored websites
- Setting up spoof trade sites (or sellers) that may take a customer's money and/or send customers degraded or spoof products (to deny, disrupt, degrade/denigrate, delay, deceive, discredit, dissuade or deter)
- Interrupting (i.e., filtering, deleting, creating or modifying) communications between real customers and traders (to deny, disrupt, delay, deceive, dissuade or deter)
- Taking over control of online websites (to deny, disrupt, discredit or delay)
- Denial of telephone and computer service (to deny, delay or disrupt)
- Hosting targets' online communications/websites for collecting SIGINT (to disrupt, delay, deter or deny)
- Contacting host websites asking them to remove material (to deny, disrupt, delay, dissuade or deter)

"(The term "HUMINT" commonly refers to human intelligence.) It was based on interviews with 22 JTRIG staffers and seven support staff from GCHQ. In it, Dhami provides advice on how JTRIG can improve its approach and attain desired outcomes, for example, by applying theories and research around ***persuasive communication, compliance, obedience, conformity, and the creation of trust and distrust.*** " Compliance can be achieved through various techniques," reads the "obedience" section of Dhami's report, "including: Engaging the norm of reciprocity; engendering liking (e.g., via ingratiation or attractiveness); stressing the importance of social validation (e.g., via highlighting that others have also complied); instilling a sense of scarcity or secrecy; getting the 'foot-in-the-door' (i.e., getting compliance to a small request/issue first); and applying the 'door-in-the-face' or 'low-ball' tactics (i.e., asking for compliance on a large request/issue first and having hidden aspects to a request/issue that someone has already complied with, respectively)." In other cases, Dhami presents a menu of possible effective approaches grounded in specific psychological research that is formally cited throughout the body of the paper, in a "recommended reading list," and in a "list of training requirements for JTRIG staff."

• Propaganda techniques include," Dhami writes,"Using stereotypes; substituting names/labels for neutral ones; censorship or systematic selection of information; repetition; assertions without arguments; and presenting a message for and against a subject." Dhami's 42-page report came nearly three years before the world became aware of JTRIG and of its methods of deception, dissemination of online propaganda, and acquisition of human intelligence. The unit's existence was first revealed through leaked documents provided by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden and published by NBC News and The Intercept. JTRIG's tactics include seeding propaganda on social media, impersonating people online, and creating false blog posts to discredit targets. Dhami recommends that staff be trained on the various specific techniques she outlines, that a social influence research program be developed, that the possibility of compiling psychological profiles for exploitation in intelligence operations be explored, that a catalog of online crime prevention techniques be developed, that processes for assessment of risk and effectiveness be established, and that JTRIG develop guidelines for operational best practices.JTRIG has now acquired this material'Some of the psychology research texts Dhami recommends are marked with an asterisk indicating "JTRIG has now acquired this material." The Interceptattempted to contact the authors of materials that had been "acquired" byJTRIG.

One of those authors, Peter Smith, emeritus professor of psychology at University of Sussex near Brighton, England, raised questions about Dhami's paper. " Some of the reported actions of JTRIG are clearly contrary to the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society," Smith wrote in an email. "The descriptions that [s]he provides of the social psychology of influence are broadly accurate, but the use of this knowledge to deceive people or distort the information that they receive is not advocated in any of the sources that [s]he cites." He added: "I am certainly not comfortable with the ways in which Dr. Dhami has used [her] knowledge of social psychology." Dhami's profile at Middlesex University does not list the British Psychological Society among her current professional affiliations. Other psychologists cited by Dhami did not criticize her paper but rather disclaimed any control over her use of their material. Susan Fiske, a Princeton psychologist and fellow of six APA divisions, also had her work acquired by JTRIG. She told The Intercept by email, "Anyone can buy my book. **When you write a textbook, it's in the public domain, and anyone can use it**. I have no control over what happens after it is published."

" Eleven other psychologists whose work was cited by Dhami did not respond to emails from The Intercept.•A 'bespoke' code of ethics. Dhami does directly address ethical concerns in part of her report. But her treatment of ethics is brief. JTRIG, she writes, operates under "no specific guidelines on ethical practice." She notes that professional codes of conduct exist, such as those of the British Society of Criminology and the British Psychological Society, but determines that "clearly, not all of the aspects of the above codes will be relevant or applicable to JTRIG's operations" and the codes "do not identify best practice in all of the types of online interactions that JTRIG staff might be involved in." "Thus," she concludes, "JTRIG may need to develop a bespoke code" that complies with the U.K. legislation governing intelligence agencies."

"I do not think that JTRIG requires a set of ethical guidelines that is different from those that are relevant to the rest of humanity." The very idea of a "bespoke code" that "complies" with the law but merely considers established ethics codes "that may be pertinent," without being bound by them, is

controversial, but not novel. It's far from clear that there is an ethically correct way to engage in acts to discredit, deceive, denigrate, and degrade unsuspecting targets, and it's decidedly possible that developing guidelines that purport to do so will only lend legitimacy to unsavory behavior."

2.18   *Behavioural science needs.* Staff identified various areas of behavioural science support that their effects and online HUMINT operations might benefit from. These mostly referred to social psychology, and included:
- Psychology of relationships (including online social interactions)
- Cultural impact on social interactions
- Psychology of trust and distrust
- Psychological profiling
- Developing realistic online aliases/personalities
- Psychology of persuasion
- Mass messaging
- Marketing/branding of YouTube videos
- Plausible excuses for not being able to communicate or interact with target online (or face-to-face)
- Effective delay tactics and "hooks" when dealing with online customers
- Online criminal behaviour (e.g., child exploitation, fraud)
- Youth behaviour online
- Online business operations

3.6   *Obedience* is a direct form of social influence where an individual submits to, or complies with, an authority figure. Obedience may be explained by factors such as diffusion of responsibility, perception of the authority figure being legitimate, and socialisation (including social role). Compliance can be achieved through various techniques including: Engaging the norm of reciprocity; engendering liking (e.g., via ingratiation or attractiveness); stressing the importance of social validation (e.g., via highlighting that others have also complied); instilling a sense of scarcity or secrecy; getting the "foot-in-the-door" (i.e., getting compliance to a small request/issue first); and applying the "door-in-the-face" or "low-ball" tactics (i.e., asking for compliance on a large request/issue first and having hidden aspects to a request/issue that someone has already complied with, respectively). Conversely, efforts to reduce obedience may be effectively based around educating people about the adverse consequences of compliance; encouraging them to question authority; and exposing them to examples of disobedience.

3.7   *Conformity* is an indirect form of social influence whereby an individual's beliefs, feelings and behaviours yield to those (norms) of a social group to which the

• Andrew Fishman ✉ fishman@ theintercept.com t @AndrewDFish

Google's Use of "Mood Manipulation" on the Public: Psychologists Approve Ban on Role

"By JAMES RISEN - TORONTO — The American Psychological Association on Friday overwhelmingly approved a new ban on any involvement by psychologists in national security interrogations conducted by the United States government, even non-coercive interrogations now conducted by the Obama administration. The council of representatives of the organization, the nation's largest professional association of psychologists, voted to impose the ban at its annual meeting here." The actions of Google's inner workings now affect so many billions of people, without there knowledge, that the APA would have a fit if they knew the whole story.

Google's user manipulation program (**PSYWAR**), or the basic aspects of modern **psychological operations** (**PSYOP**), have been known by many other names or terms, including MISO, Psy Ops, Political Warfare, "Hearts and Minds," and propaganda.[1] The term is used "to denote any action which is practiced mainly by psychological methods with the aim of evoking a planned psychological reaction in other people."[2] Various techniques are used, and are aimed at influencing a target audience's value system, belief system, emotions, motives, reasoning, or behavior. It is used to induce confessions or reinforce attitudes and behaviors favorable to the originator's objectives, and are sometimes combined with black operations or false flag tactics. It is also used to destroy the morale of political enemies through tactics that aim to depress or alter the public's psychological states.[3][4] Target audiences can be governments, organizations, groups, and individuals, and is not just limited to soldiers. Civilians of foreign territories can also be targeted by Google technology and media so as to cause an effect in the government of their country.[5]

In *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, Jacques Ellul discusses psychological warfare as a common peace policy practice between nations as a form of indirect aggression in place of military aggression. This type of propaganda drains the public opinion of an opposing regime by stripping away its power on public opinion. This form of aggression is hard to defend against because no international court of justice is capable of protecting against psychological aggression since it cannot be legally adjudicated. The only defense is using the same means of psychological warfare. It is the burden of every government to defend its state against propaganda aggression. "Here the propagandists is [sic] dealing with a foreign adversary whose morale he seeks to destroy by psychological means so that the opponent begins to doubt the validity of his beliefs and actions."[6][7]

History

CONFIDENTIAL – EYES ONLY, FTC AND RELATED STAFF

Early
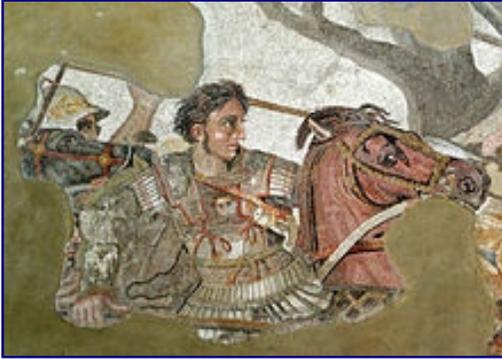
Mosaic of [Alexander the Great](#) on his campaign against the [Persian Empire](#).

Since prehistoric times, warlords and chiefs have recognised the importance of inducing psychological terror in opponents and currying favour with supporters. An early practitioner of such tactics was [Alexander the Great](#), who [successfully conquered](#) large parts of [Europe](#) and the [Middle East](#) and held on to his territorial gains by co-opting local elites into the Greek administration and culture. Alexander left some of his men behind in each conquered city to introduce Greek culture and oppress dissident views. His soldiers were paid dowries to marry locals[8] in an effort to encourage [assimilation](#).

[Genghis Khan](#), leader of the [Mongolian Empire](#) in the 13th century AD employed this technique. Defeating the will of the enemy before having to attack and reaching a consented settlement was preferable to actually fighting. The Mongol generals demanded submission to the Khan, and threatened the initially captured villages with complete destruction if they refused to surrender. If they had to fight to take the settlement, the Mongol generals fulfilled their threats and massacred the survivors. Tales of the encroaching horde spread to the next villages and created an aura of insecurity that undermined the possibility of future resistance.[9]

The [Khan](#) also employed tactics that made his numbers seem greater than they actually were. During night operations he ordered each soldier to light three torches at dusk to give the illusion of an overwhelming army and deceive and intimidate enemy scouts. He also sometimes had objects tied to the tails of his horses, so that riding on open and dry fields raised a cloud of dust that gave the enemy the impression of great numbers. His soldiers used arrows specially notched to whistle as they flew through the air, creating a terrifying noise.[10]

A later Mongolian chieftain, [Tamerlane](#), built a pyramid of 90,000 human heads in front of the walls of [Delhi](#), to convince them to surrender during his [Indian campaign](#). Another tactic favoured by the Mongols was catapulting severed human heads over city walls to frighten the inhabitants and spread disease in the besieged city's closed confines.

The Muslim caliph [Omar](#), in his battles against the [Byzantine Empire](#), sent small reinforcements in the form of a continuous stream, giving the impression that a large force would accumulate eventually if not swiftly dealt with.

Modern

First World War
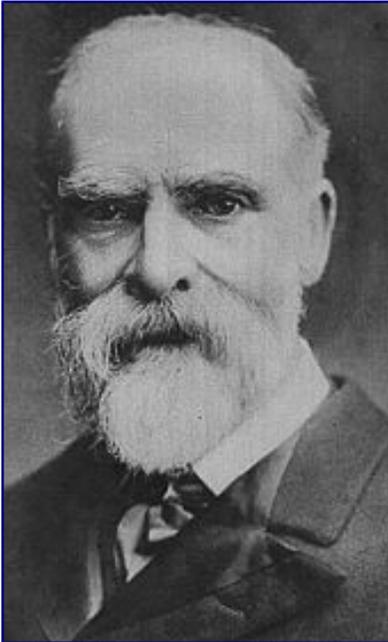
[Lord Bryce](#) led the [commission](#) of 1915 to document German [atrocities committed against Belgian civilians](#).

The start of modern psychological operations in war is generally dated to the [First World War](#). By that point, Western societies were increasingly educated and urbanized, and mass media was available in the form of large circulation [newspapers](#) and posters. It was also possible to transmit propaganda to the enemy via the use of [airborne leaflets](#) or through explosive delivery systems like modified artillery or [mortar](#) rounds.[11]

At the start of the war, the belligerents, especially the British and Germans, began distributing propaganda, both domestically and on the [Western front](#). The British had several advantages that allowed them to succeed in the battle for [world opinion;](#) they had one of the world's most reputable news systems, with much experience in international and cross-cultural communication and they controlled much of the [undersea cable](#) system then in operation. These capabilities were easily transitioned to the task of warfare.

The British also had a [diplomatic service](#) that kept up good relations with many nations around the world, in contrast to the reputation of the German services.[12] While German attempts to foment revolution in parts of the [British Empire](#), such as [Ireland](#) and [India](#), were ineffective, extensive experience in the [Middle East](#) allowed the British to successfully induce the Arabs to [revolt](#) against the [Ottoman Empire](#).

In August 1914, [David Lloyd George](#) appointed [Charles Masterman](#) [MP](#), to head a [Propaganda Agency](#) at Wellington House. A distinguished body of literary talent was enlisted for the task, with its members including [Arthur Conan Doyle](#), [Ford Madox Ford](#), [G. K. Chesterton](#), [Thomas Hardy](#), [Rudyard Kipling](#) and [H. G. Wells](#). Over 1,160 pamphlets were published during the war and distributed to neutral countries, and eventually, to Germany. One of the first significant publications, the *[Report on Alleged German Outrages](#)* of 1915, had a great effect on general opinion across the world. The pamphlet documented [atrocities](#), both actual and alleged, committed by the German army against Belgian civilians. A Dutch illustrator, [Louis Raemaekers](#), provided highly emotional drawings which appeared in the pamphlet.[13]

In 1917, the bureau was subsumed into the new [Department of Information](#) and branched out into [telegraph](#) communications, [radio](#), newspapers, magazines and the cinema. In 1918, [Viscount Northcliffe](#) was appointed Director of Propaganda in Enemy Countries. The department was split between propaganda against Germany organized by H.G Wells and against the [Austro-Hungarian Empire](#) supervised by [Wickham Steed](#) and [Robert William Seton-Watson](#); the attempts of the latter focused on the lack of ethnic cohesion in the Empire and stoked the grievances of minorities such as the [Croats](#) and [Slovenes](#). It had a significant effect on the final collapse of the [Austro-Hungarian Army](#) at the [Battle of Vittorio Veneto](#).[11]

Aerial leaflets were dropped over German trenches containing postcards from [prisoners of war](#) detailing their humane conditions, surrender notices and general propaganda against the [Kaiser](#) and the German [generals](#). By the end of the war, [MI7b](#) had distributed almost 26 million leaflets. The Germans began shooting the leaflet-dropping pilots, prompting the British to develop unmanned leaflet balloons that drifted across [no-man's land](#). At least one in seven of these leaflets were not handed in by the soldiers to their superiors, despite severe penalties for that offence. Even General [Hindenburg](#) admitted that "Unsuspectingly, many thousands consumed the poison", and [POWs](#) admitted to being disillusioned by the propaganda leaflets that depicted the use of German troops as mere [cannon fodder](#). In 1915, the British began airdropping a regular leaflet newspaper *Le Courrier de l'Air* for civilians in German-occupied France and Belgium.[14]
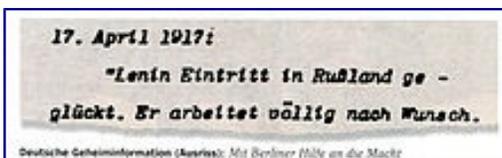
A report from a German [secret agent](#) about [Lenin](#)'s arrival to [Petrograd](#) in 1917. This event was actively arranged by the German government in a bid to destabilize Russia.

At the start of the war, the French government took control of the media to suppress negative coverage. Only in 1916, with the establishment of the Maison de la Presse, did they begin to use similar tactics for the purpose of psychological warfare. One of its sections was the "Service de la Propagande aérienne" (Aerial Propaganda Service), headed by Professor Tonnelat and [Jean-Jacques Waltz](#), an

Alsatian artist code-named "*Hansi*". The French tended to distribute leaflets of images only, although the full publication of [US President](#) [Woodrow Wilson](#)'s [Fourteen Points](#), which had been heavily edited in the German newspapers, was distributed via airborne leaflets by the French.[15]

The [Central Powers](#) were slow to use these techniques; however, at the start of the war the Germans succeeded in inducing the [Sultan](#) of the [Ottoman Empire](#) to declare 'holy war', or [Jihad](#), against the Western [infidels](#). They also attempted to foment rebellion against the [British Empire](#) in places as far afield as [Ireland](#), [Afghanistan](#), and [India](#). The Germans' greatest success was in giving the Russian revolutionary, [Lenin](#), free transit on a sealed train from [Switzerland](#) to [Finland](#) after the overthrow of the [Tsar](#). This soon paid off when the [Bolshevik Revolution](#) took [Russia](#) out of the war.[16]

World War II

An example of a [World War II](#) era leaflet meant to be dropped from an [American B-17](#) over a German city. See the [file description page](#) for a translation.

[Adolf Hitler](#) was greatly influenced by the psychological tactics of warfare the British had employed during WWI, and attributed the defeat of Germany to the effects this propaganda had on the soldiers. He became committed to the use of mass propaganda to influence the minds of the German population in the decades to come. [Joseph Goebbels](#) was appointed as [Propaganda Minister](#) when Hitler came to power in 1933, and he portrayed Hitler as a [messianic](#) figure for the redemption of Germany. Hitler also coupled this with the resonating projections of his orations for effect.

Germany's *Fall Grün* plan of invasion of Czechoslovakia had a large part dealing with psychological warfare aimed both at the Czechoslovak civilians and government as well as, crucially, at Czechoslovak allies.[17] It became successful to the point that Germany gained support of UK and France through [appeasement](#) to occupy Czechoslovakia without having to fight an all-out war, sustaining only minimum losses in [covert war](#) before the [Munich Agreement](#).

At the start of the [Second World War](#), the British set up the [Political Warfare Executive](#) to produce and distribute propaganda. Through the use of [powerful transmitters](#), broadcasts could be made across Europe. [Sefton Delmer](#) managed a successful [black propaganda](#) campaign through several radio stations which were designed to be popular with German troops while at the same time introducing news material that would weaken their morale under a veneer of authenticity. British Prime Minister [Winston Churchill](#) made use of radio broadcasts for [propaganda](#) against the Germans.

Map depicting the targets of all the subordinate plans of Operation Bodyguard.

During World War II, the British made extensive use of deception – developing many new techniques and theories. The main protagonists at this time were 'A' Force, set up in 1940 under Dudley Clarke, and the London Controlling Section, chartered in 1942 under the control of John Bevan.[18][19] Clarke pioneered many of the strategies of military deception. His ideas for combining fictional orders of battle, visual deception and double agents helped define Allied deception strategy during the war, for which he has been referred to as "the greatest British deceiver of WW2".[20]

During the lead up to the Allied invasion of Normandy, many new tactics in psychological warfare were devised. The plan for Operation Bodyguard set out a general strategy to mislead German high command as to the exact date and location of the invasion. Planning began in 1943 under the auspices of the London Controlling Section (LCS). A draft strategy, referred to as Plan Jael, was presented to Allied high command at the Tehran Conference. Operation Fortitude was intended to convince the Germans of a greater Allied military strength than existed, through fictional field armies, faked operations to prepare the ground for invasion and leaked information about the Allied order of battle and war plans.

Elaborate naval deceptions (Operations *Glimmer*, *Taxable* and *Big Drum*) were undertaken in the English Channel.[21] Small ships and aircraft simulated invasion fleets lying off Pas de Calais, Cap d'Antifer and the western flank of the real invasion force.[22] At the same time Operation *Titanic* involved the RAF dropping fake paratroopers to the east and west of the Normandy landings.

A dummy Sherman tank, used to deceive the Germans.

The deceptions were implemented with the use of double agents, radio traffic and visual deception. The British "Double Cross" anti-espionage operation had proven very successful from the outset of the war, [23] and the LCS was able to use double agents to send back misleading information about Allied invasion plans.[24] The use of visual deception, including mock tanks and other military hardware had been developed during the North Africa campaign. Mock hardware was created for *Bodyguard*; in particular, dummy landing craft were stockpiled to give the impression that the invasion would take place near Calais.

The Operation was a strategic success and the Normandy landings caught German defences unaware. Subsequent deception led Hitler into delaying reinforcement from the Calais region for nearly seven weeks.[25]

Vietnam War

"Viet Cong, beware!" – South Vietnam leaflets urging the defection of Viet Cong.

The United States ran an extensive program of psychological warfare during the Vietnam War. The Phoenix Program had the dual aim of assassinating NLF personnel and terrorizing any potential sympathizers or passive supporters. Chieu Hoi program of the South Vietnam government promoted NLF defections.

When members of the PRG were assassinated, CIA and Special Forces operatives placed playing cards in the mouth of the deceased as a calling card. During the Phoenix Program, over 19,000 NLF supporters were killed.[26]

Recent operations

An American PSYOP leaflet disseminated during the Iraq War. It shows a caricature of Al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi caught in a rat trap. The caption reads "This is your future, Zarqawi".

The CIA made extensive use of Contra soldiers to destabilize the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. [27] The CIA used psychological warfare techniques against the Panamanians by broadcasting pirate TV broadcasts. The CIA has extensively used propaganda broadcasts against the Cuban government through TV Marti, based in Miami, Florida. However, the Cuban government has been successful at jamming the signal of TV Marti.

In the Iraq War, the United States used the shock and awe campaign to psychologically maim, and break the will of the Iraqi Army to fight.

Social media has enabled the use of disinformation on a wide scale. Analysts have found evidence of doctored or misleading photographs spread by social media in the Syrian Civil War and 2014 Russian military intervention in Ukraine, possibly with state involvement.[28]

Most modern uses of the term psychological warfare, refers to the following military methods:

- Demoralization:
    - Distributing pamphlets that encourage desertion or supply instructions on how to surrender
    - Shock and awe military strategy
    - Projecting repetitive and annoying sounds and music for long periods at high volume towards groups under siege like during Operation Nifty Package
- Propaganda radio stations, such as Lord Haw-Haw in World War II on the "Germany calling" station
- Renaming cities and other places when captured, such as the renaming of Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City after Vietnamese victory in the Vietnam War
- False flag events
- Use of loudspeaker systems to communicate with enemy soldiers
- Terrorism[29]
- The threat of chemical weapons[30]

Most of these techniques were developed during World War II or earlier, and have been used to some degree in every conflict since. Daniel Lerner was in the OSS (the predecessor to the American CIA) and in his book, attempts to analyze how effective the various strategies were. He concludes that there is little evidence that any of them were dramatically successful, except perhaps surrender instructions over loudspeakers when victory was imminent. It should be noted, though, that measuring the success or failure of psychological warfare is very hard, as the conditions are very far from being a controlled experiment.

Lerner also divides psychological warfare operations into three categories:[31][*page needed*]

- White propaganda (Omissions and Emphasis): Truthful and not strongly biased, where the source of information is acknowledged.
- Grey propaganda (Omissions, Emphasis and Racial/Ethnic/Religious Bias): Largely truthful, containing no information that can be proven wrong; the source is not identified.
- Black propaganda (Commissions of falsification): Inherently deceitful, information given in the product is attributed to a source that was not responsible for its creation.

Lerner points out that grey and black operations ultimately have a heavy cost, in that the target population sooner or later recognizes them as propaganda and discredits the source. He writes, "This is one of the few dogmas advanced by Sykewarriors that is likely to endure as an axiom of propaganda: Credibility is a condition of persuasion. Before you can make a man do as you say, you must make him believe what you say."[31]:28 Consistent with this idea, the Allied strategy in World War II was predominantly one of truth (with certain exceptions).[*citation needed*]

Other uses

Modern use of psychological warfare is not limited to the military, but can be applied in the household as parents battle over custody of a child. As parents utilize the idea of "you'll never see your child again," they cause an alienation that psychologically changes their children, leading to mental damage in one or both of the parents as well. This alienation can cause a child to be more hostile toward whichever parent they do not currently reside with or live with for most of their time, thus psychologically destroying the morale of the parent targeted with hostility.[32]

By country

China

According to U.S. military analysts, attacking the enemy's mind is an important element of the People's Republic of China's military strategy.[33] This type of warfare is rooted in the Chinese Stratagems outlined by Sun Tzu in *The Art of War* and *Thirty-Six Stratagems*. In its dealings with its rivals, China is expected to utilize Marxism to mobilize communist loyalists, as well as flex its economic and military muscle to persuade other nations to act in China's interests. The Chinese government also tries to control the media to keep a tight hold on propaganda efforts for its people.[33]

Germany

In the German Bundeswehr, the **Zentrum Operative Information** and its subordinate **Batallion für Operative Information 950** are responsible for the PSYOP efforts (called **Operative Information** in German). Both the center and the battalion are subordinate to the new *Streitkräftebasis* (Joint Services Support Command, SKB) and together consist of about 1,200 soldiers specialising in modern communication and media technologies. One project of the German PSYOP forces is the radio station *Stimme der Freiheit* (Sada-e Azadi, Voice of Freedom),[34] heard by thousands of Afghans. Another is the publication of various newspapers and magazines in Kosovo and Afghanistan, where German soldiers serve with NATO.

United Kingdom

The British were one of the first major military powers to use psychological warfare in the First and Second World Wars. In current the British Armed Forces, PSYOPS are handled by the tri-service 15 Psychological Operations Group. (See also MI5 and Secret Intelligence Service). The Psychological Operations Group comprises over 150 personnel, approximately 75 from the regular Armed Services and 75 from the Reserves. The Group supports deployed commanders in the provision of psychological operations in operational and tactical environments.[35][36]

The Group was established immediately after the 1991 Gulf War,[37] has since grown significantly in size to meet operational requirements,[38] and from 2015 it will be one of the sub-units of the 77th

Brigade, formerly called the Security Assistance Group.[39] Stephen Jolly, the MOD's Director of Defence Communications and former Chair of the UK's National Security Communications Committee (2013–15), is thought to be the most senior serving psyops officer within British Defence.

United States

See also: Psychological Operations (United States)

U.S. Army soldier hands out a newspaper to a local in Mosul, Iraq.

U.S. Army loudspeaker team in action in Korea

The term psychological warfare is believed to have migrated from Germany to the United States in 1941.[40] During World War II, the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff defined psychological warfare broadly, stating "Psychological warfare employs *any* weapon to influence the mind of the enemy. The weapons are psychological only in the effect they produce and not because of the weapons themselves."[41] The U.S. Department of Defense currently defines psychological warfare as:

> "The planned use of propaganda and other psychological actions having the primary purpose of influencing the opinions, emotions, attitudes, and behavior of hostile foreign groups in such a way as to support the achievement of national objectives."[42]

This definition indicates that a critical element of the U.S. psychological operations capabilities includes propaganda and by extension counterpropaganda. Joint Publication 3-53 establishes specific policy to use public affairs mediums to counterpropaganda from foreign origins.[43]

The purpose of [United States](#) psychological operations is to induce or reinforce attitudes and behaviors favorable to US objectives. The [Special Activities Division](#) (SAD) is a division of the Central Intelligence Agency's [National Clandestine Service](#), responsible for Covert Action and "Special Activities". These special activities include covert political influence (which includes psychological operations) and paramilitary operations.[44] SAD's political influence group is the only US unit allowed to conduct these operations covertly and is considered the primary unit in this area.[44]

Dedicated psychological operations units exist in the [United States Army](#). The [United States Navy](#) also plans and executes limited PSYOP missions. United States PSYOP units and soldiers of all branches of the military are prohibited by law from targeting U.S. citizens with PSYOP within the borders of the United States (Executive Order S-1233, DOD Directive S-3321.1, and National Security Decision Directive 130). While United States Army PSYOP units may offer non-PSYOP support to domestic military missions, they can only target foreign audiences.

A U.S. Army field manual released in January 2013 states that "Inform and Influence Activities" are critical for describing, directing, and leading military operations. Several Army Division leadership staff are assigned to "planning, integration and synchronization of designated information-related capabilities."[45]

See also

War portal

- [Charles Douglas Jackson](#)
- [Demonizing the enemy](#)
- [Demoralization (warfare)](#)
- [Information warfare](#)
- [Lawfare](#)
- [Media manipulation](#)
- [Military psychology](#)
- [Mind games](#)
- [Minor sabotage](#)
- [Political Warfare](#)
- [Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes](#)
- [Psychological manipulation](#)

What Is Google's Motivation For These Acts?

There are a number of investigations, studies and news reports which propose different potential reasons for Google's engagement in these actions. They include:

Greed and Stock Market Rigging

By manipulating and timing news information about companies, buy-backs of stock to pump valuations, the hiding of negative news about Google's partners, ownership in supply chains and the creation or halting of federal laws affecting business, Google can synchronize trillions of dollars of stock market activity.

The Greentech VC Influence Over Washington

By Katie Fehrenbacher Aug. 18, 2010, 8:28am PDT No Comments

Buzz   0

There've been a couple articles in the past few weeks pointing to President Obama as the "clean tech investor in chief" and the presidential VC with bets on clean energy. The real trend is that venture capitalists focusing on greentech seem to have had an unprecedented influence on U.S. federal policy and allocations of the stimulus package.

When I attended the Department of Energy's (DOE) first ARPA-E conference (Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy) earlier this year in Washington D.C., I was struck by how many venture capitalists were there. I shared a cab back to the airport with some familiar Silicon Valley faces, and was told if your firm didn't have a dedicated person in Washington — in some circles they call them lobbyists — maneuvering grant and loan programs, you weren't able to be competitive.

Just look at the figures from the stimulus package (which I am fully in support of): somewhere between $50 billion and $80 billion into clean power and energy efficiency initiatives (depending on

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TECHNOLOGY

Inside the U.S. Antitrust Probe of Google

Key FTC staff wanted to sue Internet giant after finding 'real harm to consumers and to innovation'

SPA
Storag

Google's Eric Schmidt testified in 2011 about the Internet giant's business practices and defended how it displayed search results.
PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

By BRODY MULLINS, ROLFE WINKLER and BRENT KENDALL   💬 49 COMMENTS
Updated March 19, 2015 7:38 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Officials at the Federal Trade Commission concluded in 2012 that Google Inc. used anticompetitive tactics and abused its monopoly power in ways that harmed Internet users and rivals, a far harsher analysis of Google's business than was previously known.

The staff report from the agency's bureau of competition recommended the commission bring a lawsuit challenging three Google practices. The move would have triggered one of the highest-profile antitrust cases since the Justice Department sued Microsoft Corp. in the 1990s.

RELATED

- How Google Skewed Search Results
- Digits: Excerpts from FTC Staff Report on Google's Search Practices
- Google Dodges Antitrust Hit (Jan. 3, 2013)
- EU Prepares to Step Up Google

The 160-page critique, which was supposed to remain private but was inadvertently disclosed in an open-records request, concluded that Google's "conduct has resulted—and will result—in real harm to consumers and to innovation in the online search and advertising markets."

POPULAR ON W

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   Survivor
   Music P

When Wall Street Makes Crap Loans, It's a Crisis; When DOE's Steven Chu Does It, It's Green Energy.

Nick Gillespie | March 15, 2012

Via Instapundit linking to The Fiscal Times comes documentation of just what an easy grader Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Steven Chu really is. As you'll recall, a while back the Nobel laureate cum bureaucrat was asked by Rep. Paul Broun (R-Ga.) to grade his performance at DOE. Chu's humble response? "There's always room for improvement, maybe an A-."
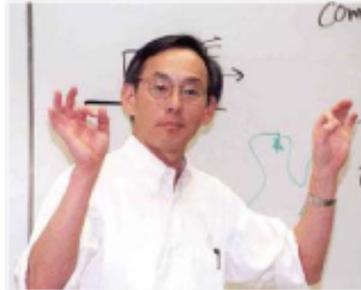
The Fiscal Times' Edward Morrissey writes about the new Government Accountability Office report on the performance of DOE's loan-guarantee program which gave way to Solyndra and other debacles. Suffice it to say, GAO wasn't grading on a curve set by the performance of Obama's cabinet. Snippets:

> The GAO looked at the handling of $30 billion outstanding in loan guarantees and future commitments and discovered that the DOE rarely follows its own written procedures for vetting and auditing applications. In fact, in many cases, the Loan Guarantee Program (LGP) couldn't even find the data managers needed to administer the loans properly....

> In almost every case study investigated by the GAO, important steps got skipped in the reviews that determined whether loan applications would be granted. In other cases, the documentation was so poor that the GAO couldn't figure out what the LGP did....

> The process had at least an 85 percent failure rate on its process check. Most people would not associate that level of process accuracy with a grade of A-minus....

> With $30 billion in taxpayer money at risk, the DOE under Steven Chu didn't bother to conduct the reviews it claimed it would on applications for loan guarantees, didn't keep records of what reviews they did accomplish, and signed off on loans with incomplete documentation and inadequate oversight of the risk. The result -- perhaps $6.5 billion immediately at risk, according to CBS, and possibly most of the $30 billion.

Morrissey drives home the point that when it comes to lending standards and the vilification of private financial institutions processing mortgages that were either backed or bought up by government-sponsored enterprises, the Obama admin is firmly in the "do as we say, not as we do" camp:

> What makes [DOE's] carelessness and

NEW YORK POST

JOHN CRUDELE

BUSINESS

Stock market rigging is no longer a 'conspiracy theory'

By John Crudele   March 25, 2015 | 9:53pm

Photo: Getty Images

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JOHN CRUDELE

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are more alike than you think

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taketh away

Why interest rates can't rise yet

An Apple on the wrist? Not on my
watch, Tim

Dear John: Swift sailing in rigged
market

The stock market is rigged.

When I started making that claim years ago — and
provided solid evidence — people scoffed. Some called
it a conspiracy theory, tinfoil hats and that sort of stuff.
Most people just ignored me.

But that's not happening anymore. The dirty secret is
out.

With stock prices rushing far ahead of economic reality
over the last six or so years, more experts in the
financial markets are coming to the same conclusion —
even if they don't fully understand how it's being
rigged or the consequences.

Ed Yardeni, a longtime Wall Street guru who isn't one
of the clowns of the bunch, said flat out last week that
the market was being propped up. "These markets are
all rigged, and I don't say that critically. I just say that
factually," he asserted on CNBC.

READ NEXT   SEC chief takes aim at predatory traders in 'dark pools'

Entertainment | Mon Mar 31, 2014 11:03am EDT   Related: ENTERTA

U.S. stock markets are rigged, says author Michael Lewis

NEW YORK | BY JOHN MCCRANK

🐦 f ✉ 8+ ✉

A Wall Street sign is pictured outside the New York Stock Exchange in New York, October 25, 2013.
REUTERS/CARLO ALLEGRI

(Reuters) - The U.S. stock market is rigged in favor of high-speed electronic trading firms, which use their advantages to extract billions from investors, according to Michael Lewis, author of a new book on the topic, "Flash Boys: A Wall Street Revolt."

High-frequency trading (HFT) is a practice carried out by many banks and proprietary trading firms using sophisticated computer programs to send gobs of orders into the market, executing a small portion of them when opportunities arise to capitalize on price imbalances, or to make markets. HFT makes up more than half of all U.S. trading volume.

The trading methods and technology that make HFT possible are all legal, and the stock exchanges HFT firms trade on are highly regulated. But Lewis said these firms are using their speed advantage to profit at the expense of other market participants to the tune of tens of billions of dollars.

"They are able to identify your desire to buy shares in Microsoft and buy them in front of you and sell them back to you at a higher price," Lewis, whose book is available on Monday, said on the television program "60 Minutes" on Sunday.

"This speed advantage that the faster traders have is milliseconds, some of it is fractions of milliseconds," said Lewis, whose books include "The Big Short" and "Moneyball."

Those milliseconds can be valuable, making it possible to send around 10,000 orders in the blink of an eye.

Political & Election Rigging Program

The following reports provide potent evidence that Google set out to rig elections, control public policy and form it's own private, unregulated, covert government.
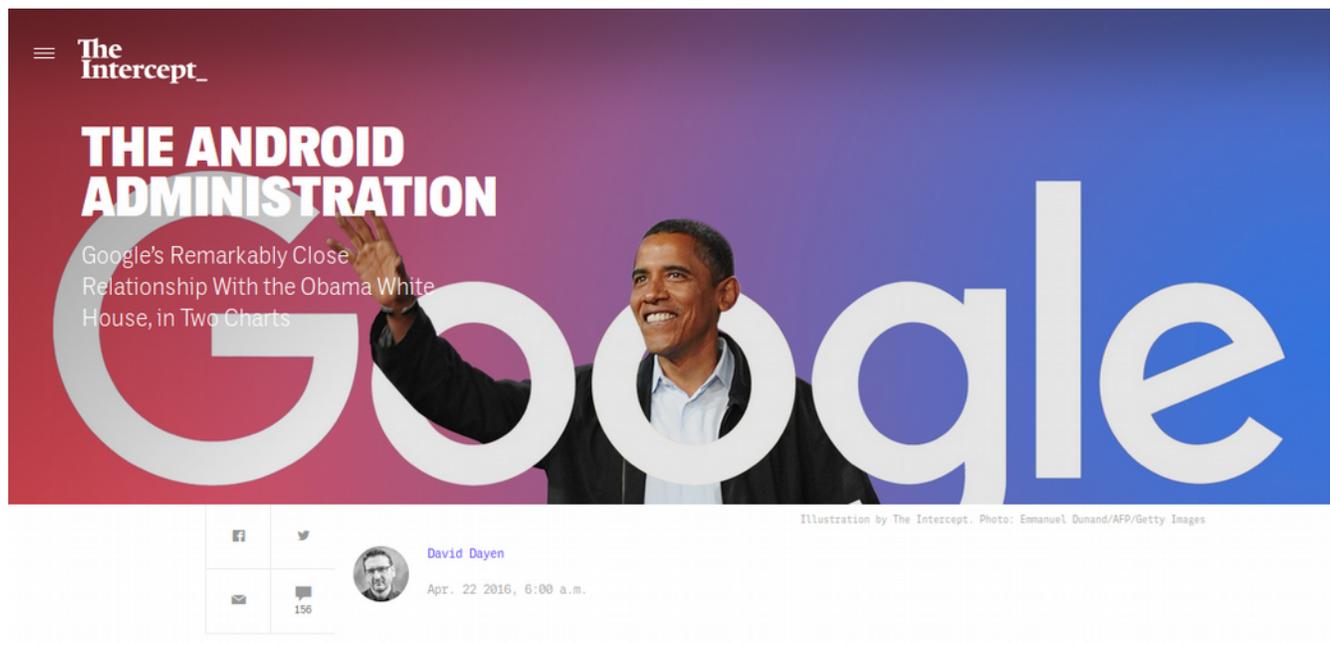
Numerous reports have documented the fact that Google's cartel was the largest financial backer of the Obama White House, the largest recipient of kick-back rewards from the Obama White House, the largest controller of information about the Obama campaign, the providers of the IT for the Obama campaign and the providers of the staff for the majority of the controlling positions of the Obama Administration. Most find this to be "suspicious" if not "a bit Smedley Butler like.."

Google's Remarkably Close Relationship With the Obama ...

cached

Apr 22, 2016 ... According to an analysis of White House data, the Google lobbyist with the most White .... The Wall Street Journal noted that Google's White House visits ...... owns or controls — Civis Analytics, The Groundwork, and Tomorrow ...

https://theintercept.com/2016/04/22/go[...]h-the-obama-white-house-in-two-charts/

Who Controls the White House? | Who Controls …

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The Executive Branch: http://www.whitehouse.gov/our-government/executive-branch White House Staff: http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/staff Jacob "Jack" J. Lew ...

https://thezog.wordpress.com/who-controls-the-white-house/

[How The Jews Took The White House | Real Jew News](#)

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How The Jews Took The White House. How The Jews Took The White House, Goldman Sachs Articles, Jewish Bankers Articles, ObamaNation Articles, How The Jews Took Washington

http://www.realzionistnews.com/?p=461

[Report finds hundreds of meetings between White House and Google](#)

[cached](#)

Apr 22, 2016 ... Google and affiliates have had meetings with the Obama White House at least 427 times. ... The data, gleaned from White House meeting logs, showed that in all, 169 .... He who controls the information controls the world.

http://thehill.com/policy/technology/2[...]eetings-between-white-house-and-google

[Google Scores 427 White House Meetings During Obama - Breitbart](#)

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Apr 25, 2016 ... Google Scores 427 White House Meetings During Obama Presidency. ... CLINTON: Obama Admin Aided Group That Became ISIS to Control ...

http://www.breitbart.com/big-governmen[...]white-house-meetings-obama-presidency/

[Visitor logs show Google's unrivaled White House access | Fox News](#)

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May 17, 2016 ... A project examining White House visitor logs shows the Obama ... Johanna Shelton, Google's director of public policy — in effect, the company's top lobbyist .... on privacy, rights and has the power to control you like no other.

http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2016/0[...]gles-unrivaled-white-house-access.html

[Google Makes Most of Close Ties to White House - WSJ](#)

[cached](#)

Mar 24, 2015 ... Google executives, including co-founder Larry Page and CEO Eric Schmidt, have visited the White House around 230 times since President ...

http://www.wsj.com/articles/google-mak[...]f-close-ties-to-white-house-1427242076

[Google lobbyists' White House visits - Student News Daily](#)

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May 25, 2016 ... Google representatives attended White House meetings more than once ... When you control the greatest technology on earth to reach people, ...

https://www.studentnewsdaily.com/daily[...]e/google-lobbyists-white-house-visits/

RELATED: Visitor logs show Google's unrivaled White House access

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May 16, 2016 ... OUR DOOR IS OPEN: Google officials have visited the White House more .... Power, Money, Societal Control... not necessarily in that order.

http://watchdog.org/265252/visitor-logs-google-white-house/

Google's Johanna Shelton visited White House 128 times since ...

cached

May 17, 2016 ... Google officials have visited the Obama White House roughly once a week since 2009, White House logs reveal, ... Tech giants control the WH.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/articl[...]cs-Obama-administration-officials.html

Lack of Oversight

Google operates in a covert manner without full transparency or effective government oversight. In fact, due to the placement of hundreds of Google staff inside of decision-making offices of the U.S. and California State Governments, along with bribes to public officials, there is currently no agency with the ability to effectively regulate Google. As Google discovers it can get away with more and more crimes, the depth and scope of these crimes tends to increase. Throughout all of history, law enforcement vacuums have always caused accelerated vacuums of organized crime.

Deviant Social Culture

Eric Schmidt, Elon Musk, John Doerr, Steve Jurvetson, and their associates, are campaign financiers, fixated on crafting the world into their egotistical, arrogant billionaire-skewed vision of "how things should be". Few, if any, voters, and normal American's, share their "vision". Silicon Valley holds the U.S. record for producing more news coverage about intern rapes, institutionalized misogyny, the refusal to hire blacks or women, "White Boy Frat House discriminationclubs", start-up collusion (see "Angelgate" and "No Poaching Conspiracy" news coverage), Hooker murders, Escort clubs, "sex Islands", trophy wives and wife-slavery, Flash Boy stock market manipulation, and other horrific social ills. Almost every Silicon Valley VC has now been discovered to have come from one of the fraternity

houses now charged, in the media, as "rape factories". This Cartel does not seem to be qualified to be making decisions on behalf of society, yet, here they are, controlling what the public sees on the internet.

Criminal Conspiracy

Some theories hold that Google's close relationship with Goldman Sachs and rogue spy operations like In-Q-Tel gave criminal elements a platform to operate illegal activities using the Google platform as a policy information control system. The Corbett Report and InfoWars websites have discussed this theory at length. While those sites are held to be in the "fringe news" segment, their points have accrued expanding evidence over time, giving more credence to this line of theory.

APPENDIX ONE: The Issa Document

CONFIDENTIAL – EYES ONLY, FTC AND RELATED STAFF

APPENDIX TWO: Whistle-Blower Testimony FTC459-667A