



Cambridge  
Analytica

# GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING AND THE INFLUENCE INDUSTRY: RESPONSES TO THE PROBLEM OF DIGITAL PROPAGANDA

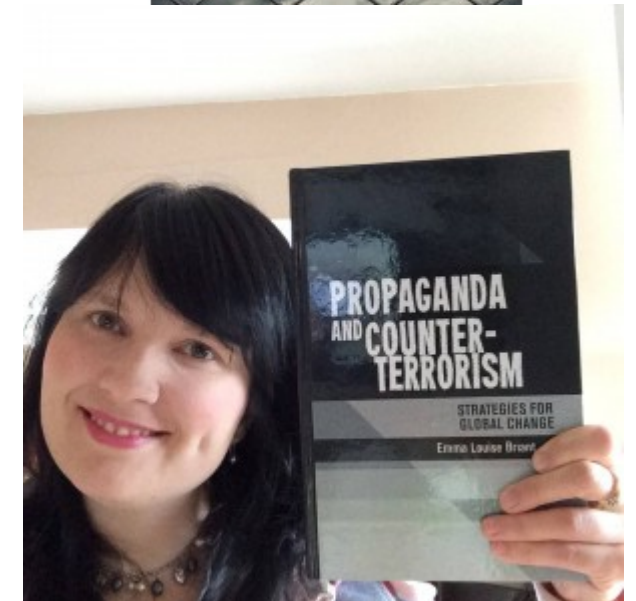
Dr Emma L Briant

Visiting Scholar George Washington University and Georgetown  
University

Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) Journalism, University of Essex

# Background

- Bad News for Refugees (2013) with Philo & Donald
- Propaganda and Counter-terrorism: Strategies for global change (2015) 50% off at Manchester Uni Press website ANALYTICA

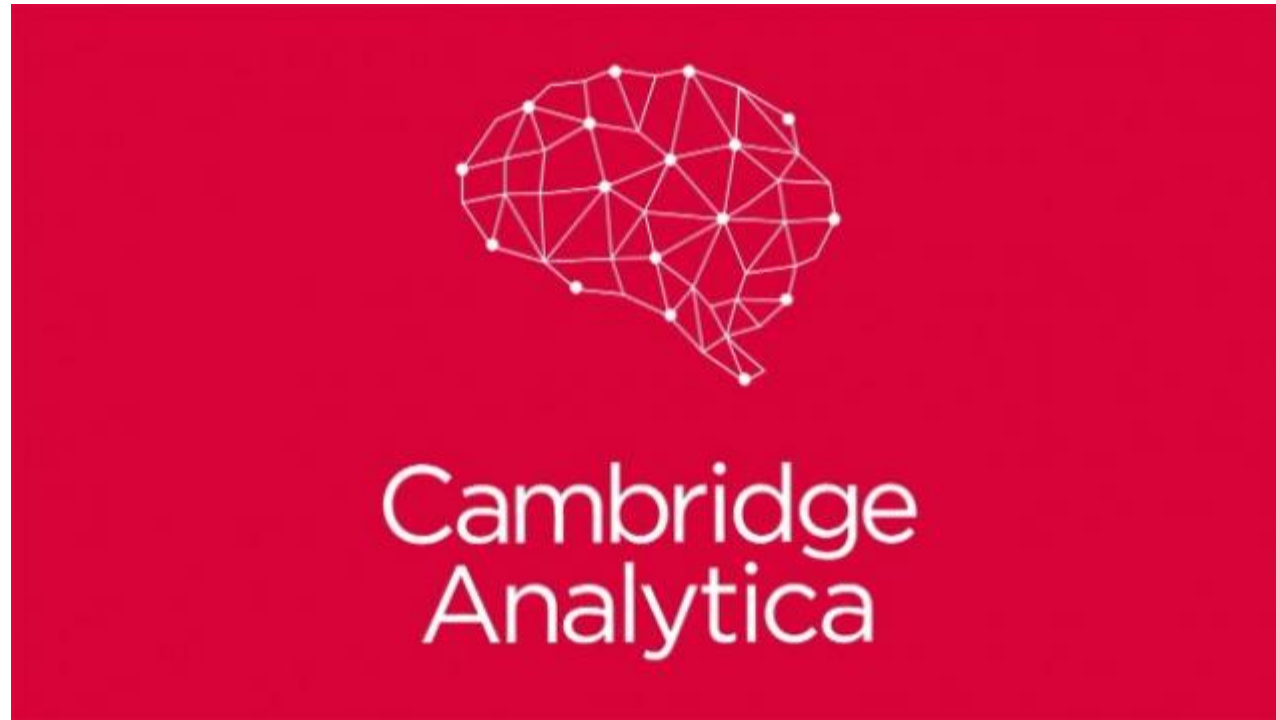


# 2016-18 Research at GWU and University of Essex



- 'What's wrong with the Democrats? Media Bias, Inequality and the Rise of Donald Trump' – Co-authored with Prof. Robert M Entman (forthcoming)
- Ongoing work on migration especially 'Brexit' work in progress!

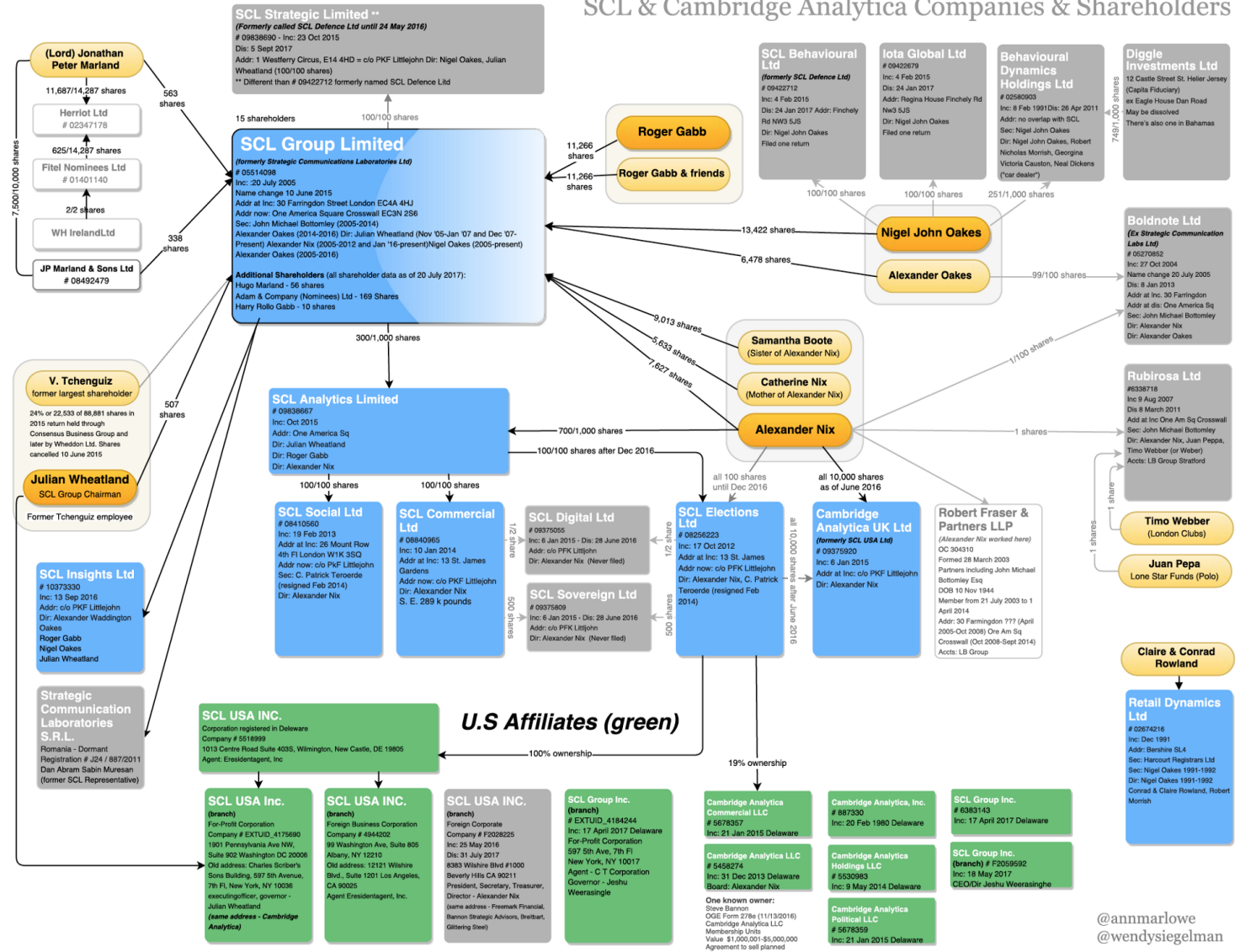
Interviews conducted with key execs at CA...  
and more at SCL



# SCL Group

## Diagram: Ann Marlowe and Wendy Siegelman

## Nigel Oakes CEO



# Recent Submission of Evidence

I submitted a substantial body of evidence to 4 UK and US investigations/inquiries. From this the following was published:

- 13 Audio Clips and their Transcripts
- 3 Explanatory Essays, 3 reports
- Can be viewed here:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/digital-culture-media-and-sport-committee/news/fake-news-briant-evidence-17-19/>

# Nigel Oakes on Trump

- CA – working with Trump campaign which hinged on creating ‘Artificial Enemies’ and cynically utilising Islamophobic content they knew to be false.
- NO: And often, as you rightly say, it’s the things that resonate, sometimes to attack the *other* group and know that you are going to lose them is going to reinforce and resonate your group. Which is why, you know, Hitler, got to be very careful about saying so, must never probably say this, off the record, but of course **Hitler attacked the Jews, because... He didn’t have a problem with the Jews at all, but the people didn’t like the Jews. So if the people... He could just use them to say... So he just leverage an artificial enemy. Well that’s exactly what Trump did. He leveraged a Muslim- I mean, you know, it’s- It was a real enemy. ISIS is a real, but how big a threat is ISIS really to America? Really, I mean, we are still talking about 9/11, well 9/11 is a long time ago. (Nigel Oakes Interviewed by Dr Emma L Briant, University of Essex both for her upcoming book ‘What’s wrong with the Democrats? Media Bias, Inequality and the rise of Donald Trump’ co-authored with Robert M Entman, and for her other sole-authored upcoming publications)**



- AW: The propaganda machine of the Nazis, for instance – you take away all the hideous horror and that kind of stuff – it was very clever, the way they managed to do what they did. In its pure marketing sense, you can see the logic of what they were saying, why they were saying it, and how they presented things, and the imagery. **(Andy Wigmore Interviewed by Dr Emma L Briant, University of Essex for research and publications on the EU Referendum)**



# CA and SCL Group – responsibility for and relationship between companies

- Recent effort to ensure companies are seen as separate – motivated by:
  - Pressure from democratic governments contracting to them
  - Survival of business interests in defence/commercial/domestic politics
  - Siloing as they grew to prevent leaks, discontented staff - Cultural variations
- But, various evidence - important staffing overlaps, financial relationships, tend to be thought of by insiders and the field as 'one' 'The Company'... 'We'
- Contracting authorities and even SCL employees get the name wrong, think of it as same company – see Kaiser's testimony

# Anxiety and Responses from Governments...

- NO: 'Cambridge Analytica have only been around for four years, and they've never worked for the State Department ever. There are some very strong lines between the various com- [companies] because **the defence people can't be seen to be getting involved in politics and, the state department, they get very upset-**'
- EB: You can be seconded though can't you? Between the different ones...
- NO: 'Yes, but...'
- NO: 'we've all worked with other people, we all have. *Internally* within the company that's a different thing. **But the actual corporate entities... uh... I mean Alexander will call me in... I'm going in this afternoon, but it's our conversations apart from - I mean we all work together but, but, I would never ever say what we do - we would never touch politics. Uh, I have in the *past*. I set up the company but *now*, I'm totally defence, and I've gotta be totally defence. I've gotta be- very... you know... because they... you know...'** (**Nigel Oakes**  
**Interviewed by Dr Emma L Briant, University of Essex**)

# Sam Patten – strategist on Nigerian campaign (oh and also in Oregon, USA)

- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/04/cambridge-analytica-used-violent-video-to-try-to-influence-nigerian-election>
- SP: ‘when they contacted me they said they had a short fuse sort of thing in Kosovo, and they didn’t really get into details and they said could you be ready one day if this happens? **I said yes without even... I assumed it was the dirty bad guys, the mafia guys? You know, the gangsters?’**
- EB: ‘Yeh’ (**Sam Patten Interviewed by Dr Emma L Briant, University of Essex**)
- ‘I’ve worked for Ukraine, Iraq, I’ve worked in deeply corrupt countries, and our system, isn’t very different’ (**Sam Patten Interviewed by Dr Emma L Briant, University of Essex**)

# Oakes' responsibility?

- EB: Has company been rebalanced towards politics and commercial by the weight of the money?
- NO: 'Yes, it has... this is where Alexander Nix has been very clever. Genuinely clever [...] He's turned it into a very successful commercial entity. uhm, Whereas he would say exactly the same about me... he'd say I'm too academic and too... you know... and the analogy in a tiny tiny lot more arrogant scale is that... **if he's the Steve Jobs, I'm the Steve Wozniak, I'm sort of the guy who wants to get the engineering right and he's the guy who wants to sell the flashy box. And he's very good at it. And I admire him enormously for doing it. But I'm the guy who say yeh but without *this* you couldn't do any of that!** (Nigel Oakes Interviewed by Dr Emma L Briant, University of Essex)

# Key questions... many, many but...

- Regardless of how you organise companies, to perpetuate activities (somewhat) autonomously, overarching 'group' includes different entities responsible for:
  - Assisting and amplifying corrupt politicians who are responsible for spreading violent and/or Islamophobic messaging (CA)
  - Spreading Islamophobic and false discourses in West (CA)
  - Making money off Western governments to intervene in religious and ethnic conflicts and tackle 'extremism' (SCL)
- Group carries responsibility for this, and overall actions of group must be evaluated when considering gov't contracts...
- Did policy of pushing them for separation facilitate and turn blind eye to unethical work?
- Intel? How much did government know? How did they respond? Was enough done? What does this mean for oversight of 'groups'?
- DARPA – responsibility for who you work on methods with.
- Emerdata, Datapropria and on and on and on....

# Key Recommendations:

*US and UK inquiries examining the intelligence and oversight mechanisms in IO contracting, strengthening these systems.*

- The adequacy of oversight of networks of companies that could be designed to obscure their activities;
- How to ensure defense-derived expertise and techniques are not:
  - used in electoral campaigns,
  - pitched to organisations with risk factors for national security.
- The following proposals should be considered as possible solutions:
  - Monitoring and restriction of technologies and methods developed by contractors with defense collaboration/funding being used in elections or pitched for any work abroad
  - Restriction of former information operations/intelligence/psychological operations personnel from working subsequently in political campaigns
  - Greater transparency in government contracting, reporting mechanisms, substantial penalties for defense contractors found obscuring overlaps and company relationships from government

*A dual strategy ensuring both plurality of platforms and regulation of influence industry to protect media users.*

- Data portability for platforms like Facebook essential to ensure competition and reduce monopoly power.
- Regulation or professional licensing in the influence industry as in other professions. Professional industry licensing could be revoked on evidence of serious violations of codes of conduct.

# Thank you for listening!

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