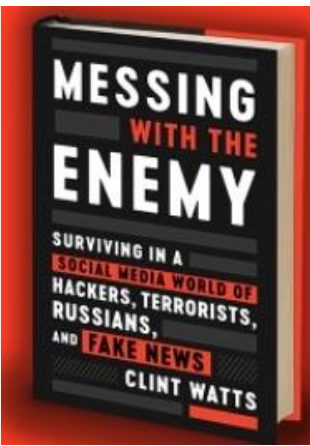# Messing With The Enemy:
Surviving In A Social Media World

Clint Watts

- Author of *Messing With The Enemy: Surviving in a Social Media World of Hackers, Terrorists, Russians and Fake News*
- Distinguished Research Fellow, Foreign Policy Research Institute
- Non-Resident Fellow, Alliance For Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund

Rise Of The Trolls

Troll Army Composition

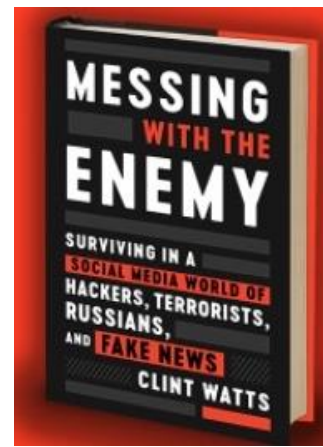### Hecklers
- Discredit
- Sow Mistrust
- Advance Narratives

Honeypots
- Compromise Accounts

Hackers
- Defacement
- Data Extraction
- Denial of Service

Clint Watts, *Messing With The Enemy,* May 2018

New Threats To Corporations

- Breaking News - Smear Campaigns
- Inciting Fear Through Bogus Incidents

-Park Evacuated
-Soldiers & Police on Scene
-Focus on Train Station
...

Walt Disney Co
NYSE: DIS - Aug 10, 7:59 PM EDT

97.86 USD ↑1.19 (1.23%)
After-hours: 97.72 ↓0.14%

| 1 day | 5 day | 1 month | 3 month | 1 year | 5 year |

98.05 3:30 PM
After hours

Open	96.70	Mkt cap	16
High	99.27	P/E ratio	18
Low	95.85	Div yield	1.

Chemical plant exploded in Centerville, Louisiana #ColumbianChemicals

False

AP The Associated Press
@AP

Breaking: Two Explosions in the White House and Barack Obama is injured

Reply Retweet Favorite More

557 RETWEETS 18 FAVORITES

False

12:07 PM - 23 Apr 13

AdrianaMfttt
OMG My stomach hurts and ate turkey today. OH SHi- #Fail #Walmart #KochFarms #NY https://t.co/chxkbydQr

CatKelley_
RT @ErtmanGreta: This #thanksgiving m sister will be in hospital. Thank you #KochFarms and #Walmart https://t.co/By3ornhCEf https://t.co/jã€

Ben_Sar_Gent
@nyc_media #KochFarms should respon https://t.co/tqtu2u8VMc

Cheese_Money
RT @Sound4Boyz: OMG this is a crime fo sho! #Walmart #KochFarms #NY #Turkey #FoodPoisoning #USDA https://t.co/VbRe5AoTbO

False

Source: Wall Street Journal analysis of Twitter data

CNN iReport
KENNEDYS

Phosphorus disaster in Idaho: the time bomb which exploded
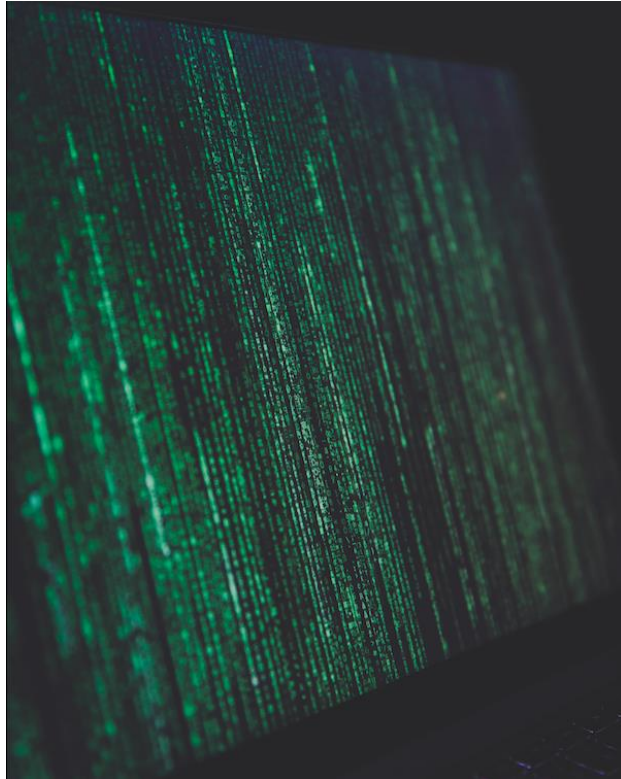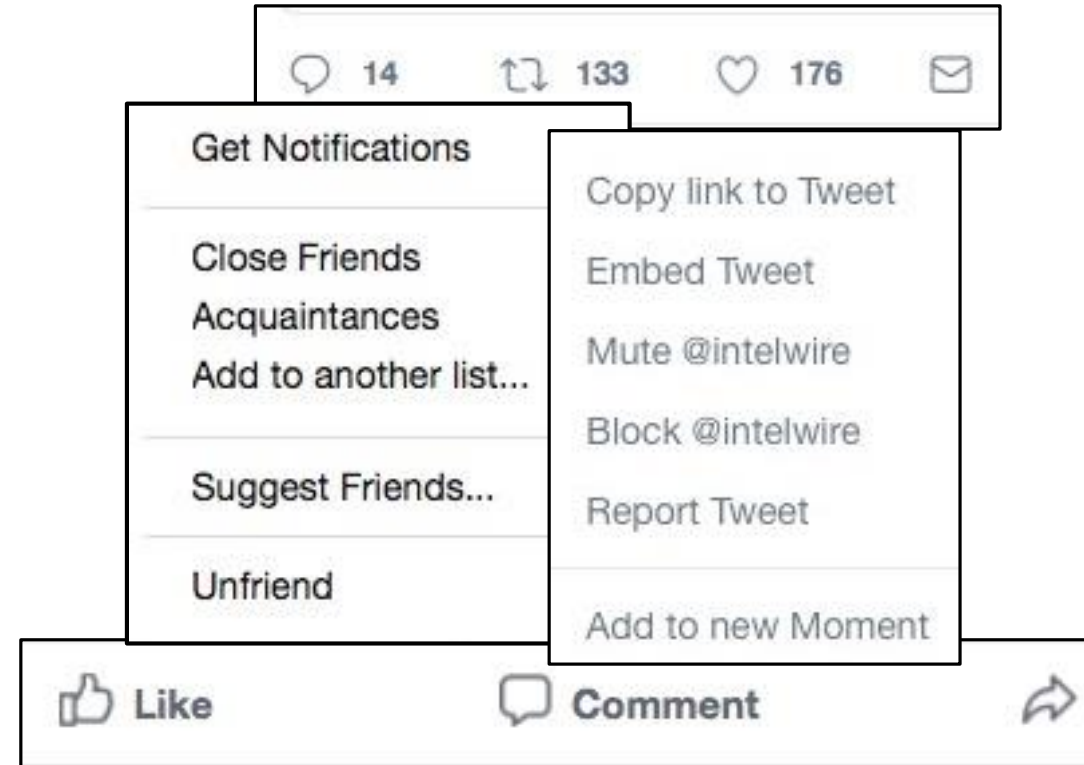
HOW TO PUT IT OUT
ROWN IT OU

False

A screenshot of CNN's citizen-journalism website iReport featuring a false story about phosphorus poisoning in Idaho.
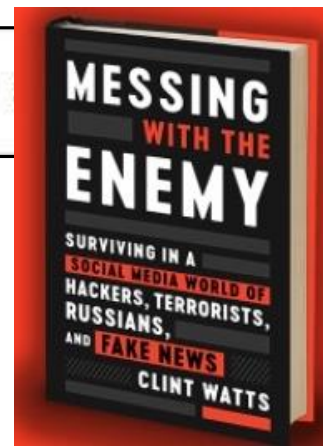
Preference Bubble – Two Parts

## One Part = Algorithm

One Part = You

"Social media tails in the virtual world wag our dog in the real world."

Clint Watts, *Messing With The Enemy,* May 2018

Preference Bubbles: 3 Dynamic Changes

- **<u>Clickbait Populism</u>** – Promotion of popular content, opinions, and the personas that voice them

"The more a person plays to the crowd's preferences, the more they will be promoted, the more power they will accrue."

6

Clint Watts, *Messing With The Enemy,* **May 2018**
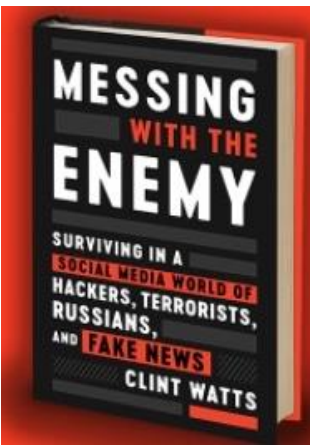
Preference Bubbles:
3 Dynamic Changes

- **<u>Social Media Nationalism</u>** – Collective adherence to a social media identity defined by shared beliefs demarcated by hashtags, avatars and account bios.

"Stronger allegiance to your digital tribe than your physical nation."

Clint Watts, *Messing With The Enemy,* May 2018
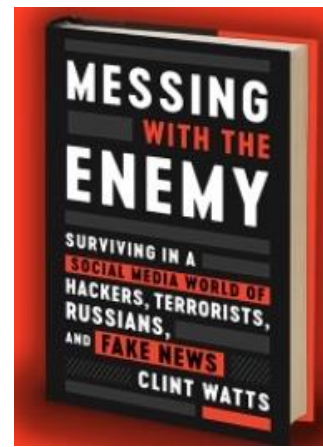
Preference Bubbles: 3 Dynamic Changes

- **Death of Expertise** – Belief that anyone connected to the Internet with a social media account knows as much as anyone else on any given topic, regardless of experience, training, education or specialty.

"Access to more information than ever, but we seem to understand less."

Clint Watts, *Messing With The Enemy,* **May 2018**
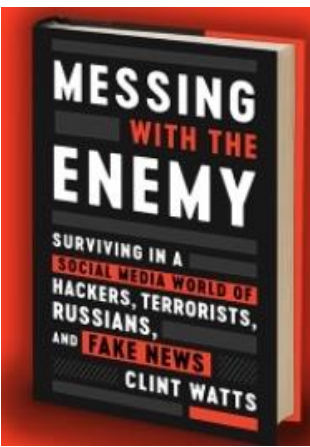
Five Generations Of Online Manipulation – Evolution of Advanced Persistent Manipulators (APM)

Generation	Era	Actors	Advancement
1	"Disrupt The System"	Hacktivists (Anonymous, Lulzsec, etc.)	• Hacking in pursuit of influence to shape public perceptions
2	"Exploit The System"	Extremists (AQ, AQ-Iraq, ISI, ISIS, IS)	• Full spectrum, multi-platform social media influence • Attempt at app creation
3	"Distort The System"	Nation States	• Widespread, strategic hacking for influence • Full spectrum social media influence • Disinformation Fusion Center - False personas, Fringe News Outlets, Integration of in-person Influence
4	"Dominate The System"	"Trolling-As-A-Service" (Cambridge Analytica, Others)	• Employment of artificial Intelligence • Advanced social bots • Creation of false audio/digital • In-person provocations • Migration to app influence
5	"Own The System"	Authoritarian Regimes (now) & Multi-National Corporations (future)	• Balkanization of the Internet driving users to apps • Incentivize human behavior to create preferred reality

Advanced Persistent Manipulators (APM)
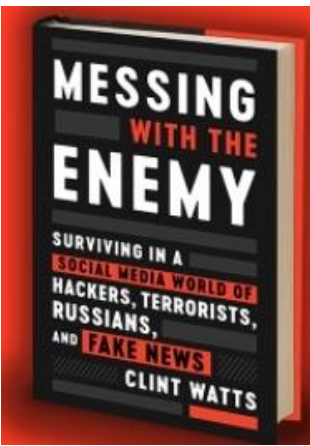
"Well resourced, Multi-platform, Full Spectrum"

Objectives	Methods	Actors

Objectives

- **Influence Audiences**
  - ➤ **Shape Opinions**
  - ➤ **Sell Products & Services**

- **Discredit Adversaries**

- **Enlist Allies & Agents**

- **Incite Fear & Provoke Conflict**
  - ➤ **Real or Imagined**

- **Distort Reality**
  - ➤ **Re-Write History**
  - ➤ **Launder Reputations**
  - ➤ **Alternative Explanation Flooding**

Methods

Sophistication (Less → More)

- **Compromise Targets**
- **Deploy Social Media Advancing Narratives**
  - ➤ **True & False, Overt & Covert**
- **Create Forgeries**
- **Leverage Agents of Influence**
- **Employ Computational Propaganda**
- **Stage Real World Provocations**
- **Create Alternative Information Outlets**
- **Develop Pseudo-science, Revised Histories**
  - ➤ **Via Think Tanks, Non-Profits & Universities**

Actors

Resources (Less → More)

- **Activist Groups**
- **Extremist Groups**
- **Nation States**
- **Political Campaigns, PAC's**
- **Lobbyists & Public Relations Firms**
- **Extremely Wealthy**

Actors & Methods

- **Trolling-as-a-Service - Disinformation For Hire**
- **Social Media Influencers-as-a-Weapon**
- **Pseudoscience Firms**
- **Alternative Universities**
- **Cross Platform Computational Propaganda**
  - *From social 'bots' to social 'bot communities'*
- **Shallow Fakes to Deep Fakes - Challenging Reality**
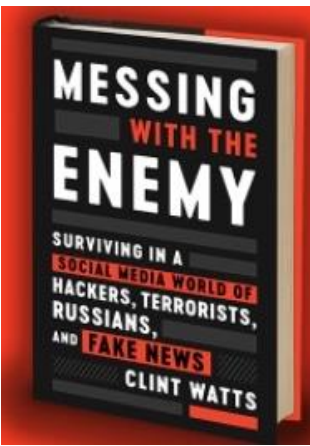- **Crowdfunding As A Pathway**

Clint Watts, *Messing With The Enemy,* May 2018

Countries

- **Restore trust and confidence in institutions**

- **Reinforce data and science**

- **Refute falsehoods levied against the government**

- **Partner with social media companies to stop false information impacting public safety**

- **Information rating systems**

<u>Companies & Agencies</u>

- Have a social media usage policy for employees

- User training for cyber security *& social media*

- Maintain an insider threat program beyond just data loss

- Develop & rehearse playbooks - Brand & reputational protection plan
  - ➤ *Respond to smear campaign*
  - ➤ *Strategy for public social media engagement*

- Tools
  - ➤ *Real time brand protection – speed is essential*
  - ➤ *Content development & dissemination*
  - ➤ *Tips & indicators system*
  - ➤ *Key network monitoring*

**Clint Watts,** *Messing With The Enemy,* **May 2018**
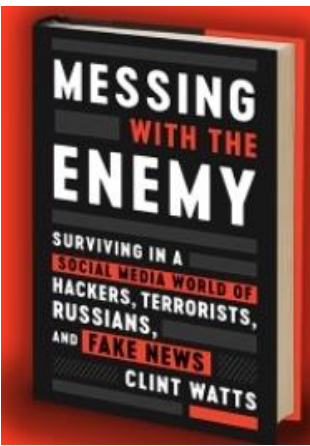
How Do We Survive In A Social Media World?

Citizens

1. Determine the costs & benefits of social media use

2. Value human connections more than virtual connections

3. Spend more time in the physical world than the virtual world

4. Know the source of the information you consume

5. Listen more than you speak, Read more than you write, Watch more than you film

6. Understand what you will tend to believe

7. Know when you are an expert and when you are not an expert

Clint Watts, *Messing With The Enemy,* May 2018
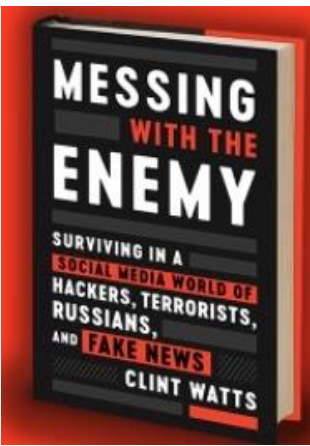
Social Media Influence – Multi-platform, Full Spectrum

Objective	Platforms	Purpose & Advantages
Placement	Primary: ***4Chan, Reddit*** Secondary: ***8Chan, YouTube, Facebook***	• Insert forgeries into social media discussions • Create & sow conspiracies in target audiences • Hide source of forgeries & attribution to Kremlin • Spread kompromat on targeted adversaries, both true & false information
Propagation	***Twitter***	• Spread narratives through overt accounts & covert personas • Amplify select target audience stories & preferable narratives supporting Kremlin goals *(Computational propaganda, make falsehoods appear more believable through repetition & volume)* • Inject stories into mainstream media worldwide • Attack political opponents, foreign policy experts & adversarial media personalities
Saturation	Primary: ***Facebook*** Secondary: ***Google Ads, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest***	• Amplify political & social divisions, erode faith in democracy through discussions & ads • Pull content from other platforms into trusted friends & family discussions • Recruit target audience for organic propaganda creation/distribution, or physical provocations (protests, rallies or even violence)
Hosting	***YouTube***	• Overt propaganda posts • Sharing of video content to target audience via producers & reporters rather than standard television channels