Twitter Thread by Dave Troy



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Four years ago this month, there was an uproar among analysts (and the public) about whether Cambridge Analytica was a PSYOP. The word is triggering; it tends to get people animated, makes people think of conspiracy theories, implies a grand master plan, shadowy operators, etc.

I have a good memory of that. What's happening now re: QAnon and whether it was a PSYOP and by whom is comparable. And it's a pointless debate. Any operation that 1) does target audience analysis, 2) deploys messaging against audiences, 3) tries to alter behavior, is a PSYOP.

The origin of this particular operation is complicated, networked, and muddied by people who wish to both claim and disclaim it. But it is functionally a PSYOP, has borrowed from that heritage, and can be analyzed in those terms. Miss me with claims to the contrary.

Researchers, journalists, and historians need to get to the bottom of how it evolved (and it did evolve, vs. a unified top-down plan), and we can do that if we work in good faith together. But we have to accept the fact that these kinds of operations are now commonplace.

It also helps to use the lens of emergence; information ops evolve, and incorporate DNA from everything that has come before: LARPs, ARGs, PSYOPs, the general public's participation + gullibility. In that context, one doesn't need top-down orchestration, necessarily.

But such a phenomenon (called by some an 'egregore') can definitely be co-opted, corralled, weaponized, aimed, cajoled, funded, shaped and steered by people with sufficient motivation and financial/social capital.

We need to train ourselves away from looking for over-simple explanations and zero-sum frames that insist on a single top-down explanation when in fact we are dealing with something messy, organic, and living.

Anyway I have great respect for all of my friends and peers who are trying to minimize harm by exposing and shrinking these destructive movements. You're all heroes. And we'll be successful if we focus on crushing the spread of the mind-infection.

And for the record, Cambridge Analytica was a rebranding (created by Steve Bannon) of SCL Elections. SCL (Strategic Communications Laboratories) was, literally, a PSYOPs firm that had done work for militaries for decades, and then more recently elections work. CA was a PSYOP.

Similar cautions apply to Parler. We don't know exactly what it is, but thank you to people like @RepMaloney and House Oversight who are aiming to find out. It has many markings of being a domestic/foreign dark-money intel op. Let's shine some sunlight on it and see.

Of course, muddying the waters further (intentionally) are bozos like Bannon and Icke who are correctly suggesting QAnon functioned as a PSYOP, but attributing it to the FBI or lord knows who else — which is nonsense. Let's do the work while retaining flexibility of thought.