

How Facebook was weaponised

The surveillance scandal of Cambridge Analytica use of Facebook data to help the Donald Trump campaign win in the 2016 election began three years earlier with a scientific paper published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The study by Michal Kosinski of Stanford, David Stillwell of the University of Cambridge and colleagues involved 58,466 adult American users of Facebook. Subjects provided information about themselves and took a standard test to classify their personalities in five broad categories: degree of openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism or OCEAN.

The researchers then correlated the "big five" personality traits with each person's Facebook "likes," an average of 227 per subject. This data led to a computer model which could predict a person's race with 95% accuracy, gender with 93% and political orientation — Democrat or Republican for instance — with 85% accuracy.

In 2014 assistant psychology professor Aleksandr Kogan who runs London-based Global Science Research (GSR) approaches Kosinski and Stillwell. Kogan wants access to the OCEAN data set on behalf of Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL). The deal fails to go ahead.

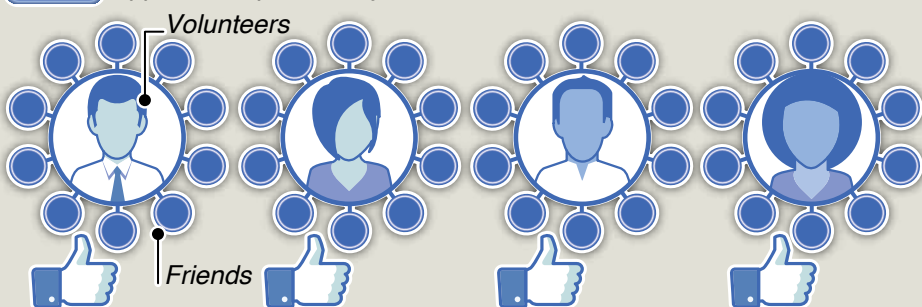
GSR develops its version of the data set using Amazon's crowdsourcing marketplace Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Kogan's subjects are paid by SCL to take the Facebook survey.

Crucially, for every individual recruited on MTurk, Kogan also captures the same data for each subject's unwitting Facebook friends — an average of around 340 friends per individual. GSR suddenly owns a massive data pool of profiles of 50 million individuals across the United States.

GSR's data set is used by Cambridge Analytica in the Republican Party presidential Iowa caucuses in support of Ted Cruz. Cruz wins. "The impressive bit," says Cambridge Analytica's chief executive, Alexander Nix, is to expand the findings from those who took the personality tests to the entire American electorate of 230 million. Nix says Cambridge Analytica also has "4,000–5,000 data points" — pieces of information — on every single adult U.S. citizen. In June 2016 the Trump campaign hires Cambridge Analytica. The campaign develops "dark posts" on Facebook to target wavering left-wingers, African-Americans, and young women to "suppress" their vote. Dark posts target users with specific profiles in specific locations. For example, news aimed at African-Americans in which Hillary Clinton refers to black men as predators or in the Miami district of Little Haiti highlighting the failure of the Clinton Foundation following the earthquake in Haiti.

Facebook became weaponised, and Donald Trump became President of the United States of America.

2013, Cambridge University: Psychology researchers publish study of more than 58,000 volunteer U.S. adults, in which online survey app reveals personality traits based on Facebook "likes"



App collects data on Facebook users' friends — average of 340 friends/user
Study can identify Democrat and Republican voters in 85% of cases



Strategic Communication Laboratories

Dec 2013: SCL launches **Cambridge Analytica (CA)**, backed by \$10 million from Republican donor **Robert Mercer** (left).

2014-16: Donald Trump's strategist, **Steve Bannon** (right) is CA's vice president



Global Science Research

May 2014: Cambridge psychologist **Aleksandr Kogan** (right) founds **Global Science Research**, which works with SCL and CA. **GSR harvests so-called psychometric profiles of 50 million U.S. Facebook accounts**



Cambridge Analytica

Feb 2016: CA chief executive **Alexander Nix** (above) works with **Ted Cruz's** campaign in Republican Party presidential primaries.

Kogan's psychometric profiles are used to create highly-personalised Facebook ads.

Cruz wins Iowa caucuses

Trump campaign

Jun-Nov 2016: Trump campaign hires CA. Team uses **dark posts** — ads which target undecided Democrats' Facebook accounts to suppress their votes. **For example, ads aimed at African-Americans misquote Hillary Clinton referring to black men as predators**

Sources: Motherboard, PNAS, Reuters Pictures: Associated Press, Getty Images © GRAPHIC NEWS

EU withdraws Russian envoy



French President Emmanuel Macron and Belgian PM Charles Michel welcome UK PM Theresa May during a EU leaders summit in Brussels, Belgium

To take new steps soon

Brussels

European Union member states agreed at a summit in Brussels to take further punitive steps against Russia in the coming days for the nerve agent attack in Salisbury, as Moscow accused the bloc of joining a London-driven hate campaign against it.

Late on Thursday, in a boost for British Prime Minister Theresa May, the 28-member EU collectively condemned the attack on a former Russian spy and said it was "highly likely" Moscow was responsible. They also recalled the EU ambassador to Russia.

"Additional steps are expected as early as Monday at the national level," summit chair Donald Tusk told reporters.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Paris and Berlin would be among countries taking further rapid and coordinated measures which other leaders

said would include the expulsion of Russian officials and possible other retaliatory actions.

Standing beside Macron and echoing his view that Russia had breached the sovereignty and security of the Union, German Chancellor Angela Merkel told a joint news conference that EU countries would debate what measures to take "and then act".

One senior official familiar with discussions said the extent of measures in the coming weeks could be "surprising" and not confined to expulsions. There is no talk of more economic sanctions, whose enforcement has divided the EU in the past.

Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis said he was likely to announce the expulsion of several people on Monday, after returning to Prague and consulting with his foreign minister.

Lithuanian President Dalia

Grybauskaitė said she was ready to expel Russian spies, whose activities she said were deeply harmful. "It is certain that a coordinated action will be taken next week, maybe at the start of it," she said. "It's absolutely obvious that the network exists and that it acts aggressively."

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis stressed that national governments wanted to retain control of the details in an area where they guard their sovereignty from Brussels. But most of those present would go home and prepare suitable steps.

Russia has denied responsibility for the March 4 attack on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, the first known offensive use of a nerve toxin in Europe since World War Two. A British judge said on Thursday that both victims may have suffered brain damage from the attack. (Reuters)

US warship sails near disputed islands in S China Sea: officials

Washington/Beijing

A U.S. Navy destroyer carried out a "freedom of navigation" operation on Friday, coming within 12 nautical miles of an artificial island built by China in the South China Sea, U.S. officials told Reuters.

The operation, which infuriated Beijing, was the latest attempt to counter what Washington sees as China's efforts to limit freedom of navigation in the strategic waters.

The officials, speaking on

condition of anonymity, said the USS Mustin travelled close to Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands and carried out manoeuvring operations. China has territorial disputes with its neighbours over the area.