

# Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation on the Networked Public Sphere

Robert Faris  
Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society  
Harvard University



<https://cyber.harvard.edu>



<https://mediacloud.org>



# Media Cloud: Overview

an open-source  
platform for studying  
media ecosystems

46,000  
sources

195  
countries

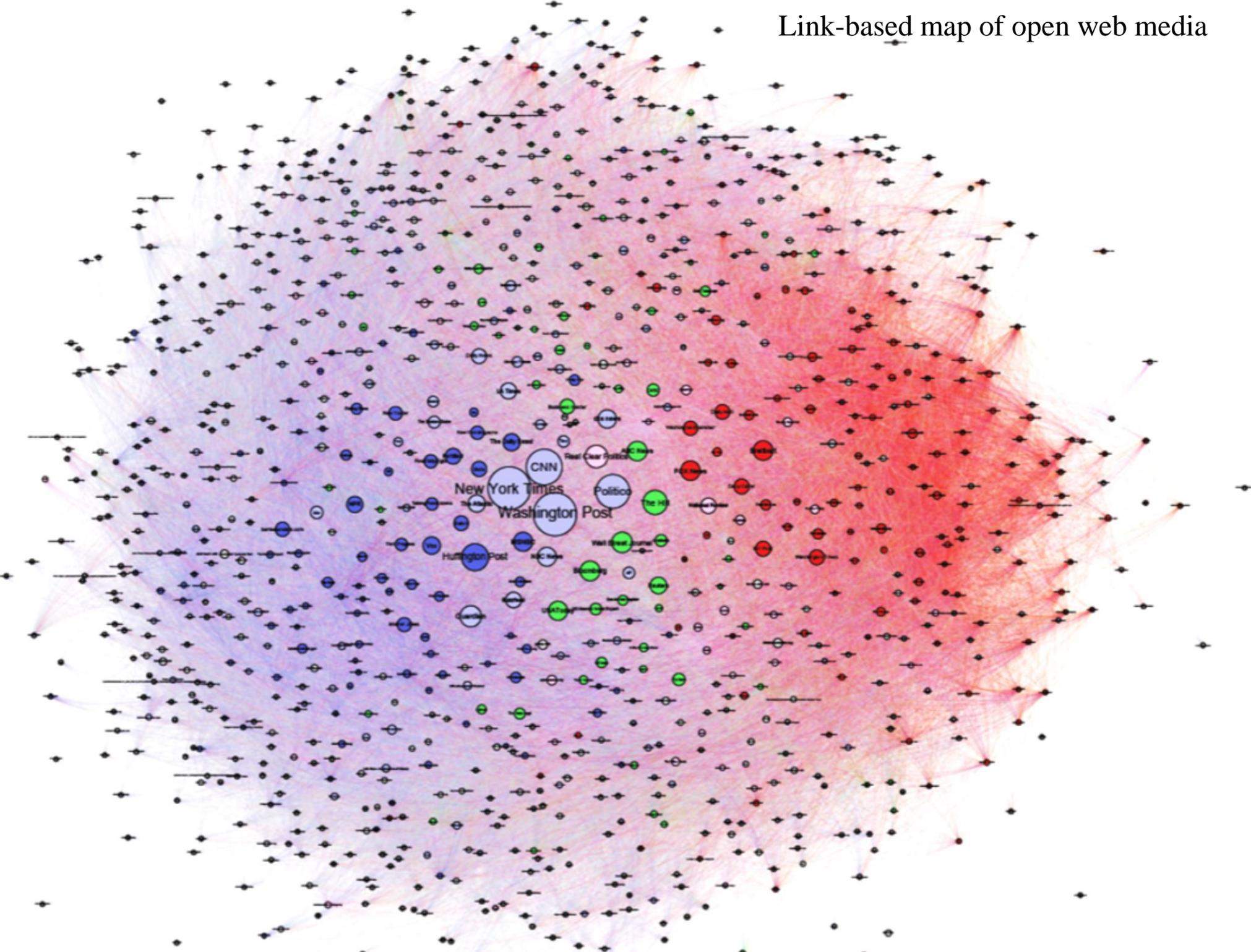
17+  
languages

over half a billion stories

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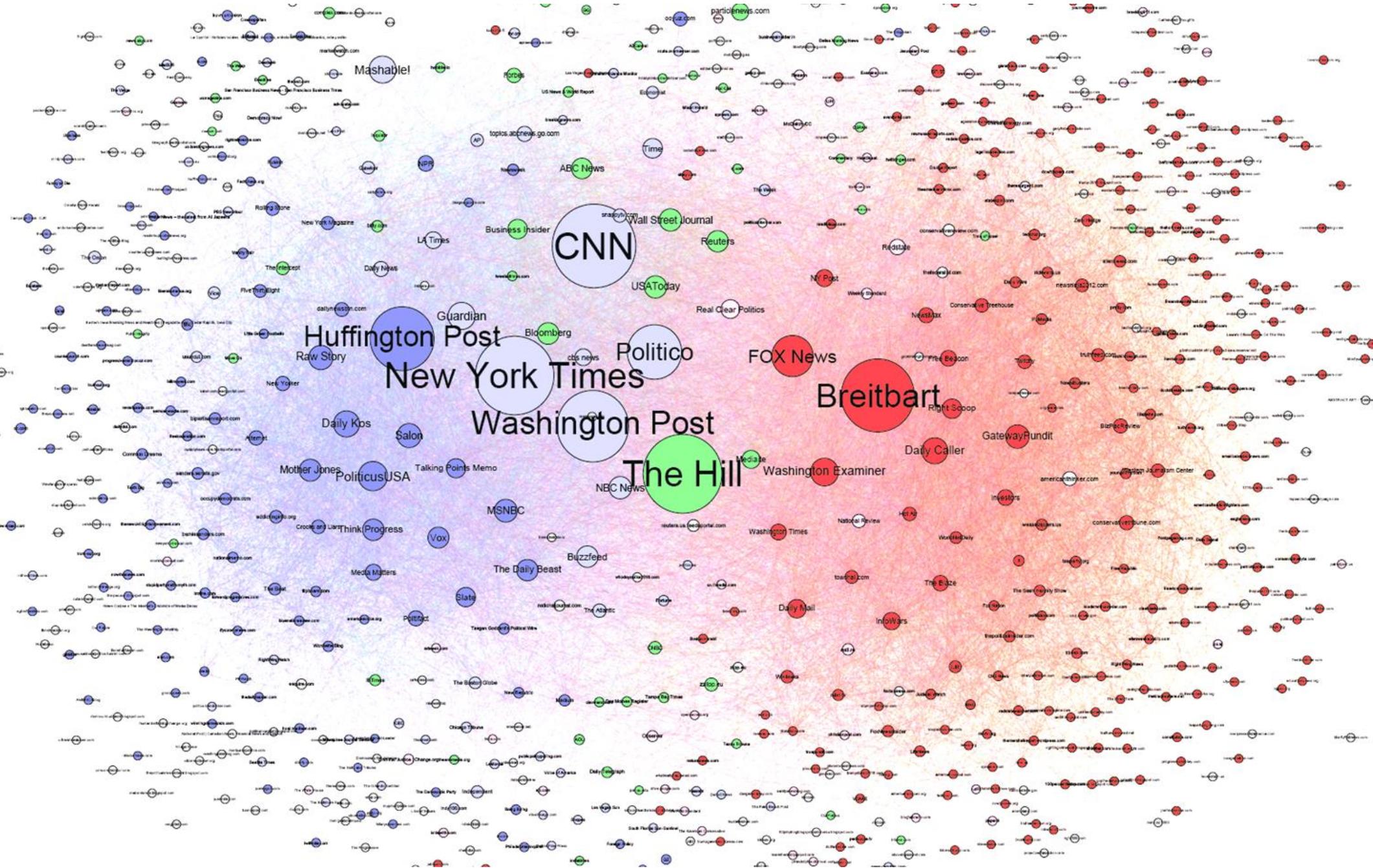


Link-based map of open web media

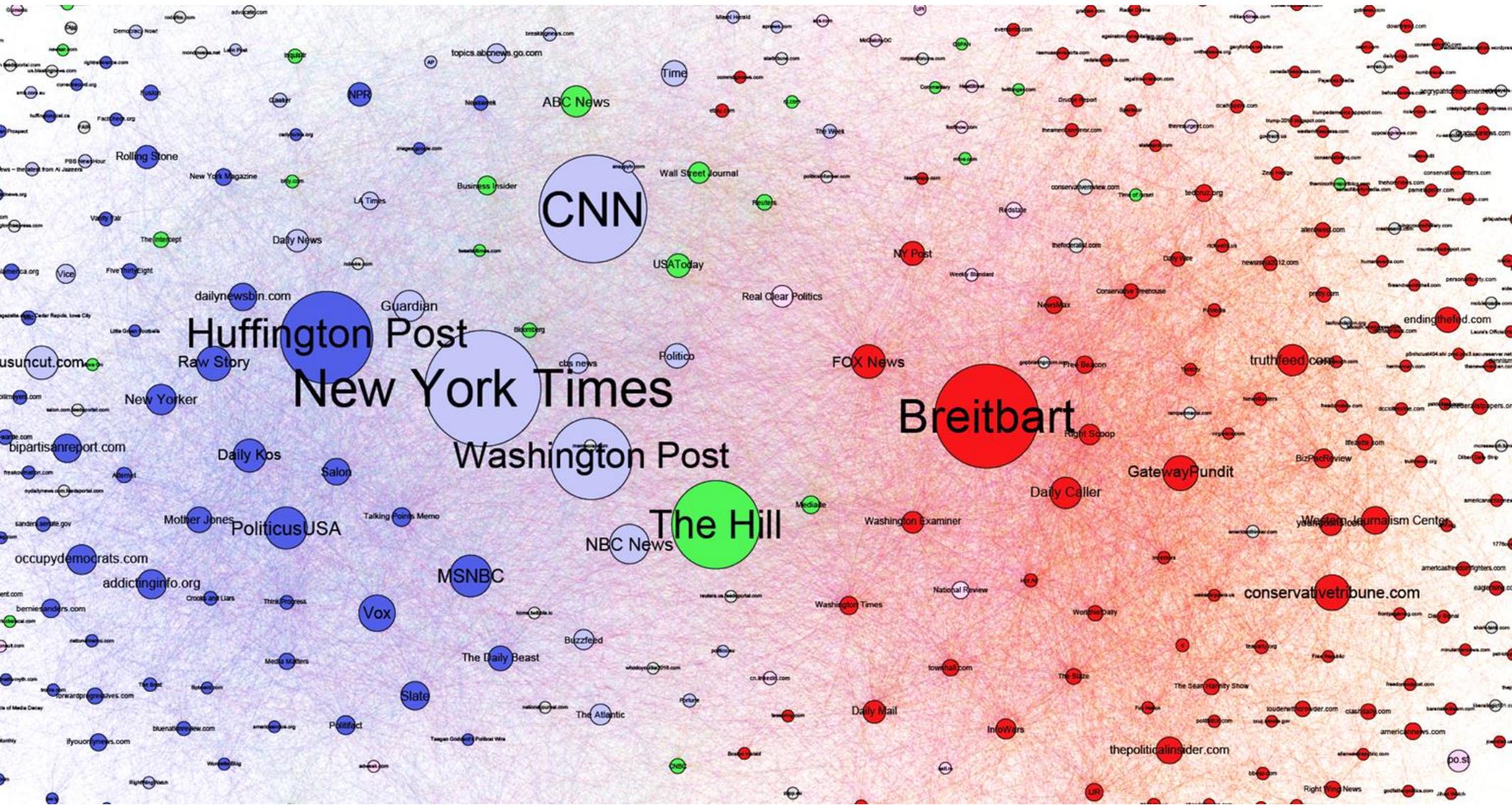




# Network map based on Twitter sharing



Network map based on Twitter sharing; nodes sized by Facebook shares



## New Defections Signal End for Health Bill

### Trump Calls On Congress to Pass Repeal-Only Plan

By THOMAS KAPLAN

- Senators Jerry Moran of Kansas and Mike Lee of Utah said they would oppose the bill to replace the Affordable Care Act, leaving it short.
- President Trump said Congress should “start from a clean slate.” Senator Mitch McConnell said he would push a measure to repeal the law now and replace it later.



Two Republican senators, Jerry Moran of Kansas, left, and Mike Lee of Utah, right, said they would not support the new health bill.

Zach Gibson/Getty Images; Michael Reynolds/European Pressphoto Agency

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

U.S. Edition | July 18, 2017 | Today's Paper

### What's News

#### GOP Abandons Senate Health Bill, Plans Repeal Vote

Senate GOP leaders abandoned their effort to dismantle and simultaneously replace much of the Affordable Care Act, after the defections of two more Republican senators. ● 1298

- Dollar Slumps After Health Bill Failure
- Sens. Mike Lee, Jerry Moran Oppose Bill

#### House Republicans Set Out Plan to Rewrite Tax Code

House Republicans are unveiling an ambitious fiscal plan on Tuesday that could let them pair a landmark tax bill with at least \$203 billion in deficit-reduction measures. ● 61

- Analysis: GOP Hopes to Unite on Tax Cuts

#### Trump Unveils Blueprint for Nafta

The Trump administration released its road map for remaking the North American Free Trade Agreement that aims to reduce the U.S. trade deficit, but steps back from some of President Trump's most fiery campaign rhetoric on trade. ● 110



The Iowa City Downtown District business association applied for a temporary license for a downtown block party.

### PROPERTY REPORT

#### Property Developers Push for Open Drinking on City Streets

More cities are allowing patrons to walk around with open containers to generate buzz in retail spots. The hope: that lively atmospheres will encourage patrons to linger and shop. ● 52

- Feds Selling Big Denver Site Online

#### Unable to Buy U.S. Military Drones, Allies Place Orders With China

Several countries in the Mideast and Africa have deployed weapons in conflicts after buying from Beijing—at lower cost. For the U.S., that is a strategic and commercial blow. ● 286



Netflix Lures Millions of New Subscribers



China's Censors Can Erase Chat Images in Transm...



Monetary Policy in Japan...

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# GERMAN SUMMER FESTIVAL ENDS WITH 1,000-STRONG RIOT

## WEEKEND MARRIED BY SEXUAL ASSAULTS, 'SHOCKING' VIOLENCE AGAINST POLICE



A German folk festival in Schorndorf in Baden-Württemberg was riddled this weekend by riots and a number of sexual assaults by men police describe as coming from migration backgrounds. On Saturday night police arrested three 17-year-old asylum seekers from Afghanistan

by CHRIS TOMLINSON 3320

SOMALI MIGRANT HOSPITALIZES WOMAN FOR WALKING 'UNCLEAN' DOGS IN PUBLIC

by VIRGINIA HALE 808

TRUMP: 'LET OBAMACARE FAIL'

by CHARLIE SPIERING 590

RIP: REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL FLATLINES...

...MCCONNELL COMES AROUND ON CLEAN REPEAL?

by MATTHEW BOVLE 10990

'STUDENTS FOR TRUMP' BACKS NO BROOKS FOR SESSIONS' ALABAMA SENATE SEAT

by ADAM SHAW 77

GOP VOTES GIVE JERRY BROWN BIG WIN ON CAP-AND-TRADE

by JON FLEISCHMAN 153

MACRON DENOUNCES ANTI-ZIONISM AS ANTI-SEMITISM

by CHRIS TOMLINSON 322

USA TODAY: NOT ENOUGH 'WOMEN', 'PEOPLE OF COLOR' IN WWII FILM 'DUNKIRK'

by JAMES DELINGPOLE 527

ALLIED ELECTRONICS

Reliable, Industrial Time-Delay Relays

TE

SHOP NOW

WHATEVER IT TAKES

WITH CURT SCHILLING

9-11AM EASTERN MONDAY-FRIDAY

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## CLINTON'S SECRET? Hillary sided with Russia on sanctions as Bill pocketed \$500G in Moscow



- VIDEO: Emails show Bill Clinton paid thousands for speech in Russia
- FBI document dump reveals secrets of Clinton probe
- FBI probe of Bernie Sanders' wife closely tracks Hillary's secret campaign plan
- VIDEO: Are Democrats really the ones with ties to Russia?
- 'Maddow's dots may never connect': Left-wing author blasts Trump-Russia narrative



### FLATLINED ObamaCare fix dies; GOP vows to repeal, start over

- Price details how GOP health plan is set apart from ObamaCare
- ObamaCare déjà vu? Moderates extracting 'payoffs' for vote on bill
- 'HANNITY': Gingrich: Congress needs to work on accessible bills



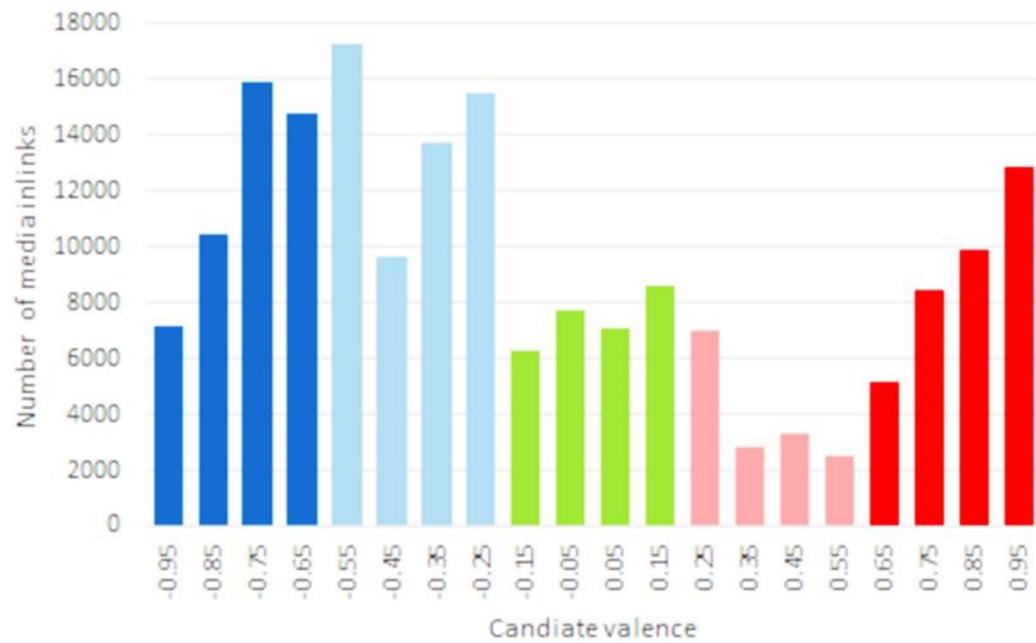
### KILLING QUESTIONED Scrutiny over why Minn. police had body cams off

- VIDEO: Tears and anger for woman shot by police
- Minn. cop who shot, killed Australian woman offers condolences



### DEADLY COMBINATION Photo of cord that killed teen in bath released

- Police: Man in deadly beating wanted to teach girl about 'tough world'
- Jail for married English teacher who arranged tryst with teen
- Indiana State Police release suspect sketch in slayings of 2 girls



Asymmetric  
Polarization

Web > SM

FB > TW

Figure 4: Partisan distribution of top 250 media sites by media inlinks

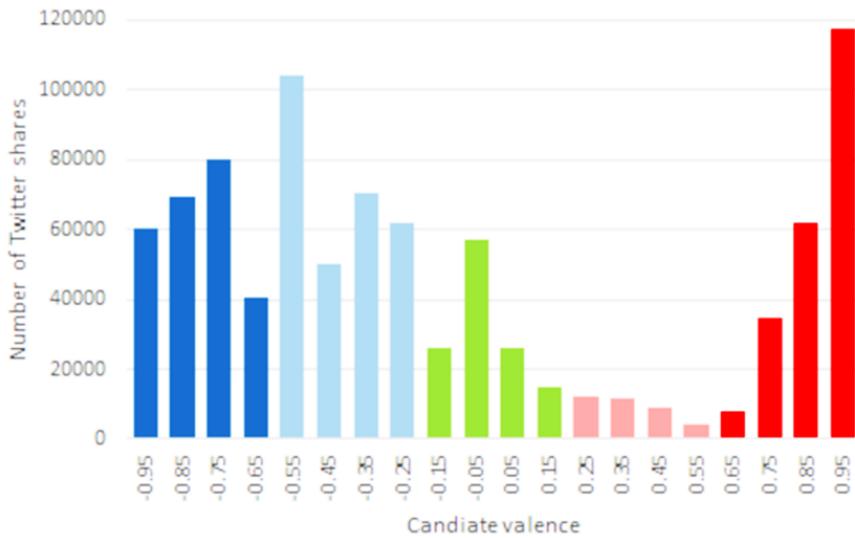


Figure 5: Partisan distribution of top 250 media sites by Twitter shares

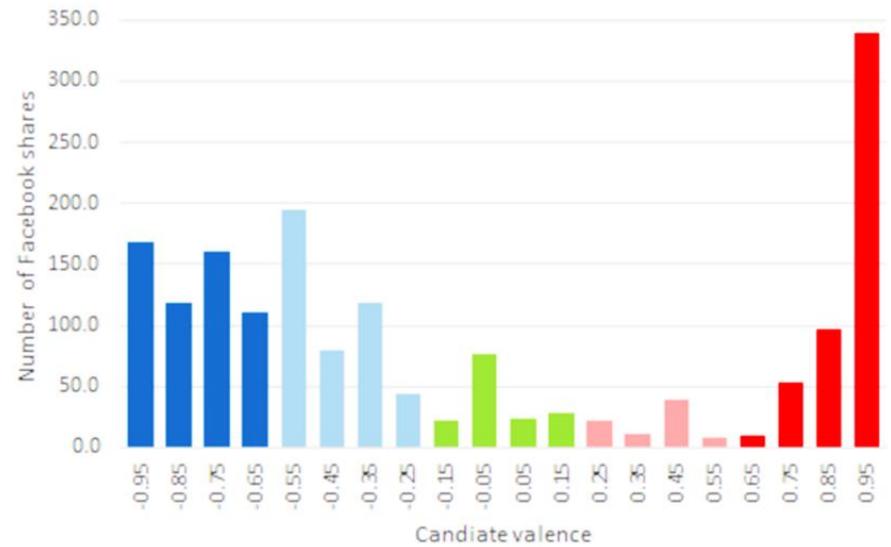


Figure 6: Partisan distribution of top 250 media sites by Facebook shares

# Network Propaganda

Materially misleading information

Mixing true and false; insinuation; leaps of logic

Enmeshed in a network of sites retelling different versions of the same story as well as reusing bits and pieces of narrative lines

Reinforcement through repetition

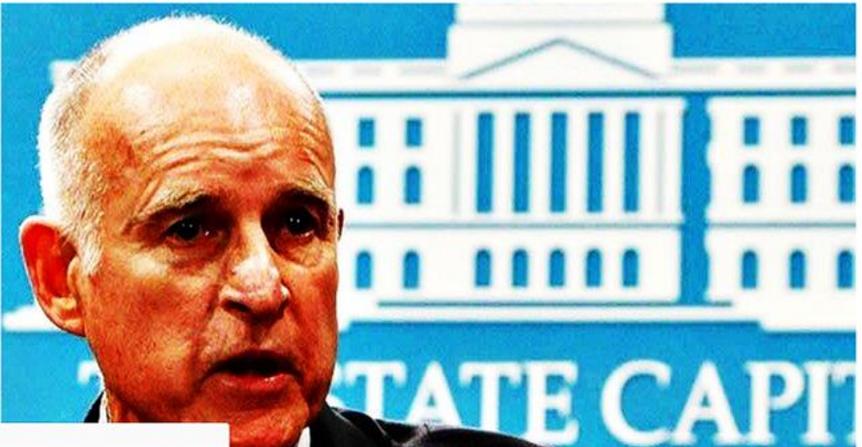
Cross-referencing in multiple sites

Fluency in shared narratives

Top-line sites legitimating lower-level sites

# JERRY BROWN SIGNS BILL THAT COULD LET ILLEGAL ALIENS VOTE

f SHARE 434672 EMAIL g+ SHARE 332 TWEET



## JEB BUSH: CLOSE NAZI TIES EXPOSED

Investigative Journalist John Buchanan's interview from: 9/11 & The Rise of the Police State

The Alex Jones Show - DECEMBER 16, 2015 9 Comments



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## ANOTHER MYSTERIOUS DEATH=> Activist and Sanders Supporter Who Served Papers to DNC on Fraud Case Found Dead

Jim Hoft Aug 4th, 2016 10:26 pm - 1016 Comments

On July 3, 2016, Shawn Lucas and filmmaker Ricardo Villaba served the DNC Services Corp. and Chairperson Debbie Wasserman Schultz at DNC's headquarters in Washington, D.C. in the fraud class action suit against



## WIKILEAKS: Here's How The Clinton's Free Private Jet Scam Works

RICHARD POLLOCK Reporter

9:45 PM 10/31/2016

f 26094 TWEET 8 g+

Ira Magaziner, the CEO of the Clinton Health Access Initiative, asked former President Bill Clinton to thank Morocco's King Mohammed VI for "offering his plane to the conference in Ethiopia."



# IT'S OVER: Hillary's ISIS Email Just Leaked & It's Worse Than Anyone Could Have Imagined...

POLITICS October 11, 2016 [PRINT](#) [EMAIL](#) A- A+

Today Wikileaks released what is, by far, the most devastating leak of the entire campaign. This makes Trump's dirty talk video looks like an episode of Barney and Friends.

Even though when Trump called Hillary the 'founder' of ISIS he was telling the truth and 100% accurate, the media has never stopped ripping him apart over it.

Today the media is forced to eat their hats because the newest batch of leaked emails show Hillary, in her own words, admitting to doing just that, funding and running ISIS.

John Podesta, Hillary's campaign chair, who was also a counselor to President Obama at the time, was the recipient of the 2014 email which was released today.

Assange promised his latest batch of leaks would lead to the indictment of Hillary, and it looks like he was not kidding. The email proves Hillary knew and was complicit in the funding and arming of ISIS by our 'allies' Saudi Arabia and Qatar!

*"The governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to ISIL..." Clinton wrote.*



>> the Syrian regime. This entire effort should be done with a low profile,  
 >> avoiding the massive traditional military operations that are at best  
 >> temporary solutions. While this military/para-military operation is moving  
 >> forward, we need to use our diplomatic and more traditional intelligence  
 >> assets to bring pressure on the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia,  
 >> which are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to ISIL and

The media is yet to report on this, even though Wikileaks has a 10 year history of being 100% accurate in their leaks, never once releasing info that proved to be false.

...Can you guess why?

Maybe it has something to do with the fact that **The Saudi's brag about funding 20% of Hillary's Presidential campaign**, and along with Qatar, are among the largest donors to the CLINTON FOUNDATION.

Is it any mystery now why ISIS has flourished under the Obama/Clinton administration? The United States has created armed and funded the terrorists overthrowing Syria via our Terrorist State allies. When you know this it makes you look at the situation in Syria differently. Perhaps Russia and Iran are the ones fighting ISIS, it stands to reason once you know we are fighting Russia, and at the same time arming ISIS.

Clinton's campaign and her Clinton Foundation are literally funded by the SAME PEOPLE who are funding ISIS and killing hundreds of thousands of innocents in the Middle East, and now, even here at home.

This is nothing short of TREASON. Hillary must be sent to trial and held accountable for crimes against humanity and Treason against the United States of America.

We know the media will do all in their power to bury this story so it is up to us to use social media to

# SAUDI ARABIA HAS FUNDED 20% OF HILLARY'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, SAUDI CROWN PRINCE CLAIMS

It is illegal in the United States for foreign countries to try to influence the outcome of elections by funding candidates.

Zero Hedge - JUNE 14, 2016 326 Comments



Politics

# Saudi Arabia Has Funded 20% Of Hillary's Presidential Campaign, Saudi Crown Prince Claims

Published June 14, 2016 [f](#) [t](#) [g](#) [e](#) [p](#)



# Propaganda

## Materially misleading information

Mixing true and false; insinuation; leaps of logic that repeats bits and pieces of shared narrative to improve recall and credibility

## Partisan agenda setting

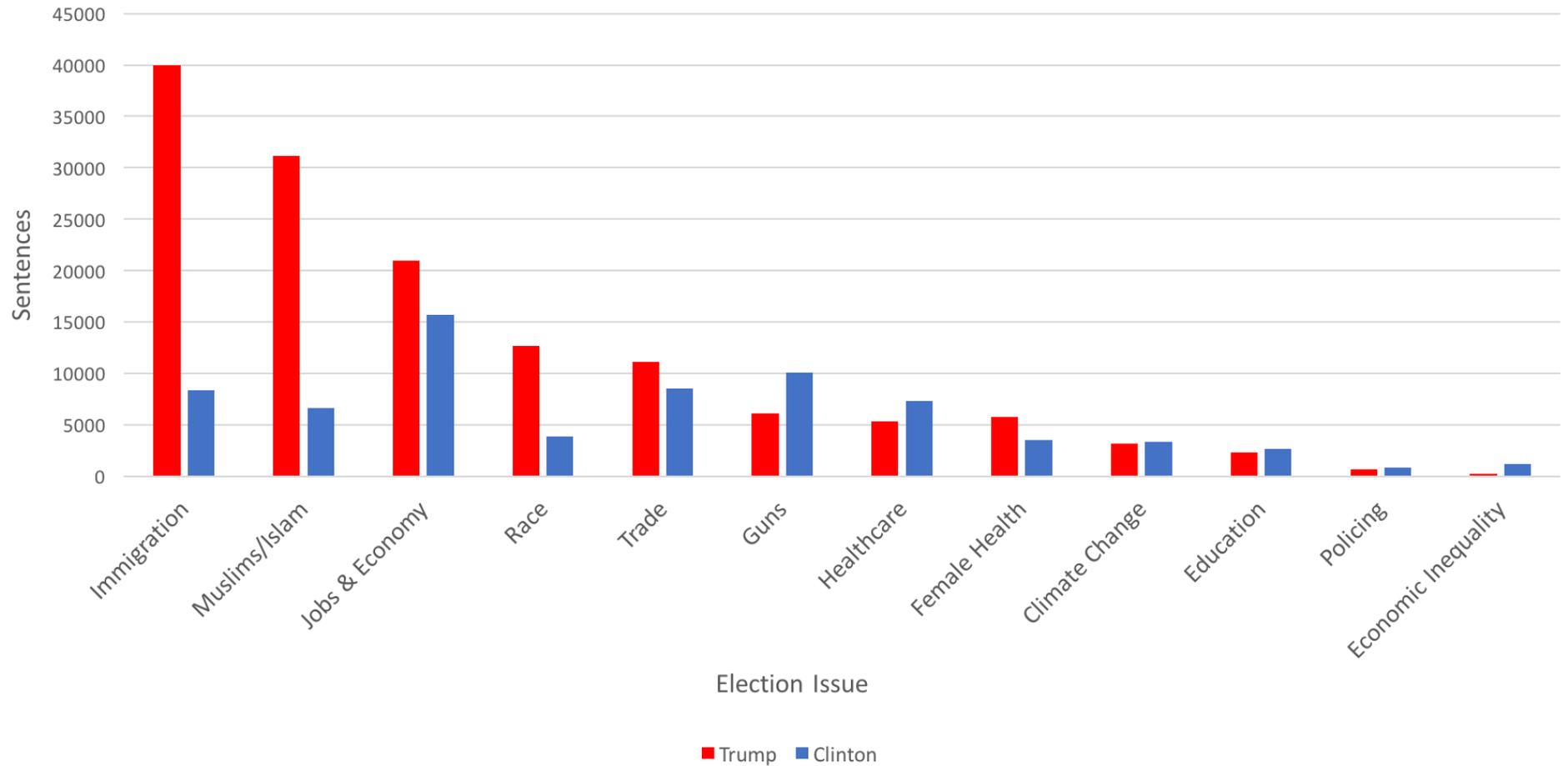
Repetition of story lines

Flooding the zone - many stories repeating similar themes with slight variations providing new opportunities for sharing

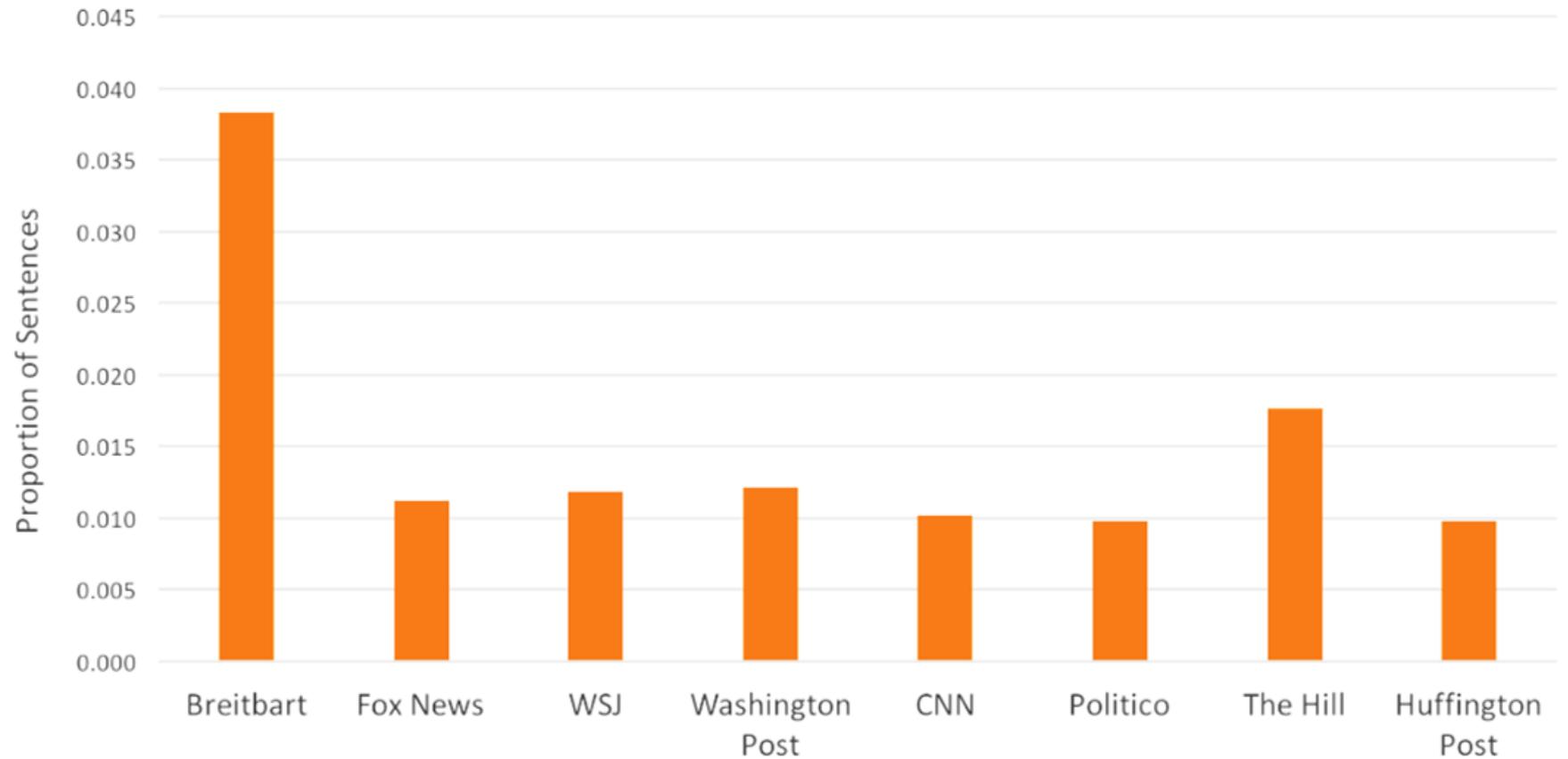
## Emotionally loaded messaging

May use behavioral targeting – extent and impact still unknown

# Topical coverage



# Proportion of sentences dedicated to immigration





# MEXICO HELPING UNVETTED AFRICAN MIGRANTS TO U.S. BORDER, MANY FROM AL-SHABAAB TERROR HOTBED

f SHARE 19765 EMAIL g+ SHARE 96 TWEET



by ILDEFONSO ORTIZ AND BRANDON DARBY | 10 Sep 2016 | 5,039

CORRUPTION CHRONICLES WEEKLY UPDATE INVESTIGATIVE BULLETIN PRESS ROOM FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES OPEN RECORDS DOCU

Judicial Watch • Drove of African Migrants in Mexico Awaiting U.S. Asylum Under Secret Pact

## THE JUDICIAL WATCH BLOG CORRUPTION CHRONICLES

### Drove of African Migrants in Mexico Awaiting U.S. Asylum Under Secret Pact

SEPTEMBER 01, 2016

### MORE THAN 347,000 CONVICTED CRIMINAL IMMIGRANTS AT LARGE IN U.S.

f SHARE 26201 EMAIL g+ SHARE 167 TWEET

### LONDON'S ISLAMIST-LINKED MAYOR TELLS U.S. AUDIENCE: 'IMMIGRANTS SHOULDN'T ASSIMILATE'

f SHARE 27810 EMAIL g+ SHARE 61 TWEET



by RAHEEM KASSAM | 16 Sep 2016 | 3,228

### SIX DISEASES RETURN TO US AS MIGRATION ADVOCATES CELEBRATE 'WORLD REFUGEE DAY'

f SHARE 23463 EMAIL g+ SHARE 108 TWEET



by MICHAEL PATRICK LEAHY | 19 Jun 2016 | 1157



### SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION CONFIRMS: ILLEGAL ALIENS TO BEGIN COLLECTING BENEFITS IN 2017

f SHARE 252233 EMAIL g+ SHARE 316 TWEET

Most shared right-wing media stories on social media about immigration

# Propaganda

Materially misleading information

Mixing true and false; insinuation; leaps of logic that repeats bits and pieces of shared narrative to improve recall and credibility

Partisan agenda setting

Emotionally loaded messaging

Attacks on the possibility of objective sources of fact

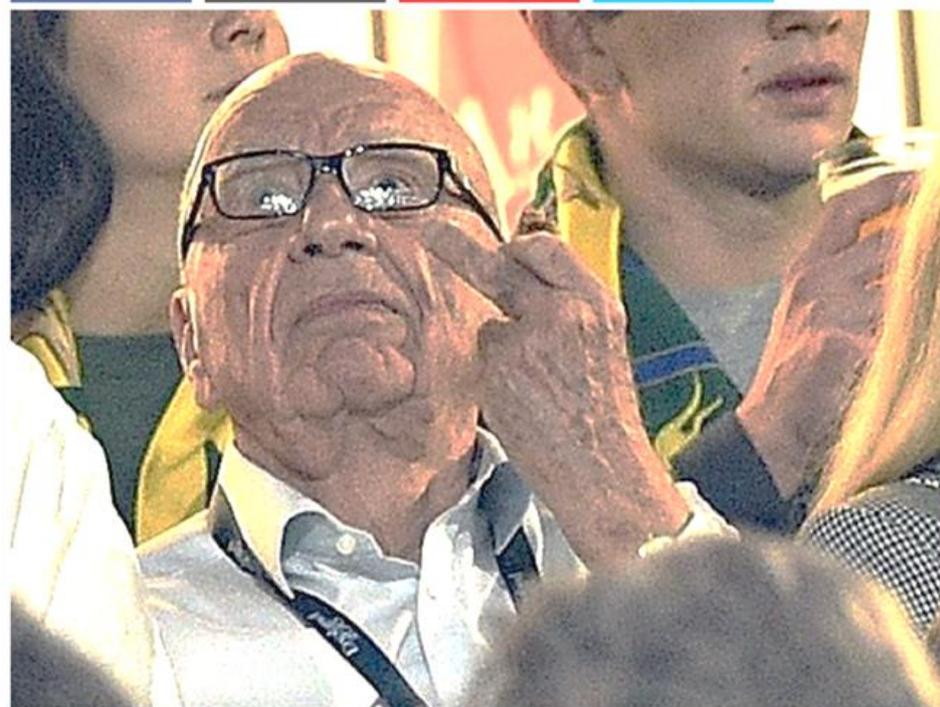
News

Science

Judiciary

# NY TIMES BOMBHELL SCOOP: FOX NEWS COLLUDED WITH RUBIO TO GIVE AMNESTY TO ILLEGAL ALIENS

f SHARE 16825 EMAIL g+ SHARE 94 TWEET



by BREITBART NEWS | 27 Feb 2016 | 18275

Jason Horowitz writes in the New York Times:

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A few weeks after Senator Marco Rubio joined a bipartisan push for an immigration overhaul in 2013, he arrived alongside Senator Chuck Schumer at the executive dining room of News Corporation's Manhattan headquarters for dinner.

# TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER REVEALS FOX NEWS DEBATE CHIEF HAS DAUGHTER WORKING FOR RUBIO

f SHARE 46826 EMAIL g+ SHARE 112 TWEET

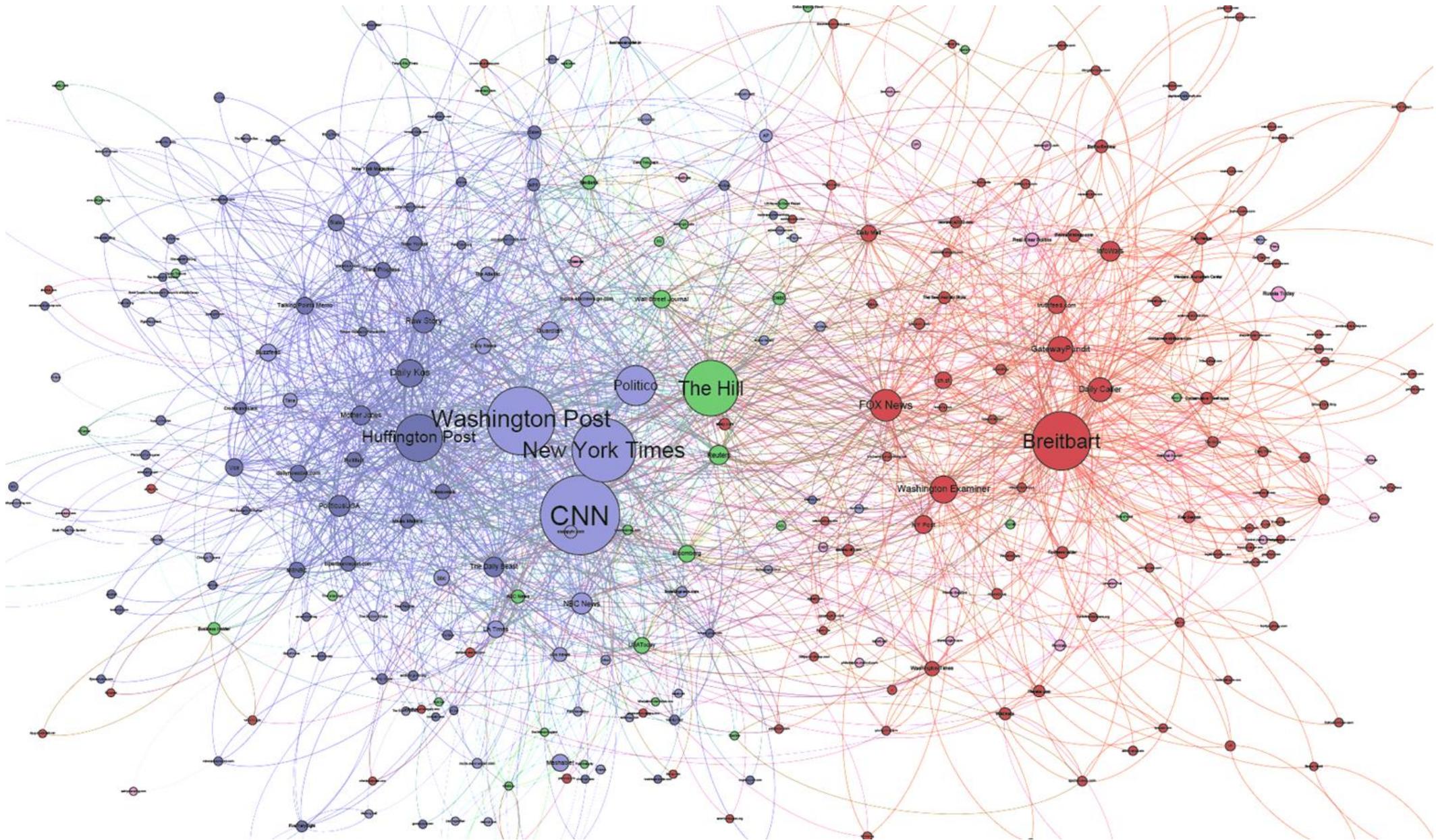


Chip Somodavilla/Getty

by MATTHEW BOYLE | 28 Jan 2016 | DES MOINES, Iowa | 2721



September 2016 by  
Twitter sharing



# Propaganda

Materially misleading information

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Partisan agenda setting

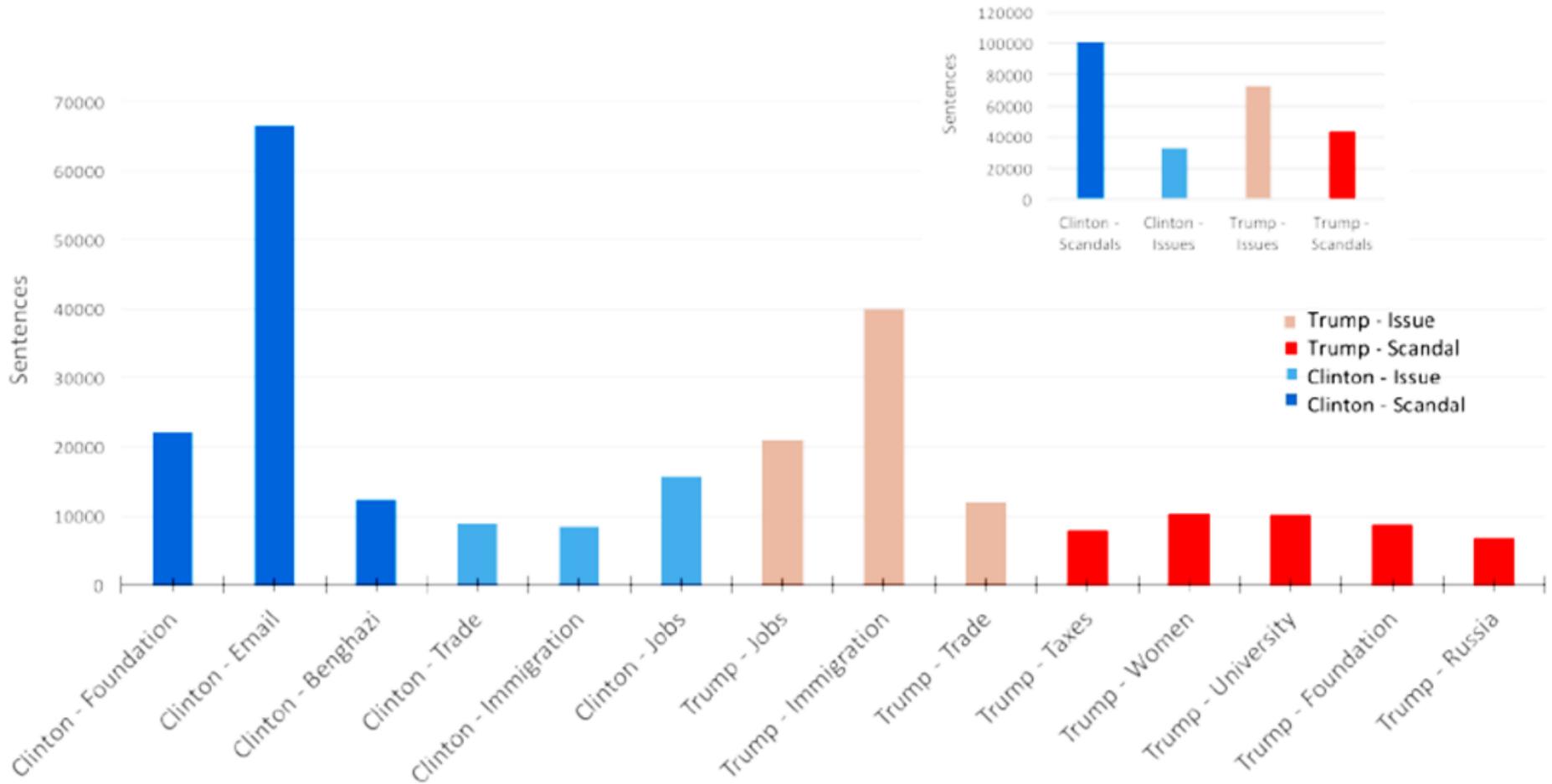
Emotionally loaded messaging

Attacks on the possibility of objective sources of fact

Honey traps for traditional media and leveraging legitimacy of message-consistent press to mobilize uncommitted populations

Acoustically-separated hyper-partisan disinformation to stoke the base

# The Breitbart-centered network successfully set the agenda of mainstream media



Clinton scandals, particularly email, dominate mainstream coverage

Trump substantive topics, particularly immigration, come through, even in critical stories

U.S.

# Cash Flowed to Clinton Foundation Amid Russian Uranium Deal



1891



Politics

# Emails reveal how foundation donors got access to Clinton and her close aides at State Dept.

Hillary Clinton on the campaign trail



View Photos

# 11 EXPLOSIVE CLINTON CASH FACTS MAINSTREAM MEDIA CONFIRM ARE ACCURATE

SHARE 10000 EMAIL G+ SHARE 300 TWEET



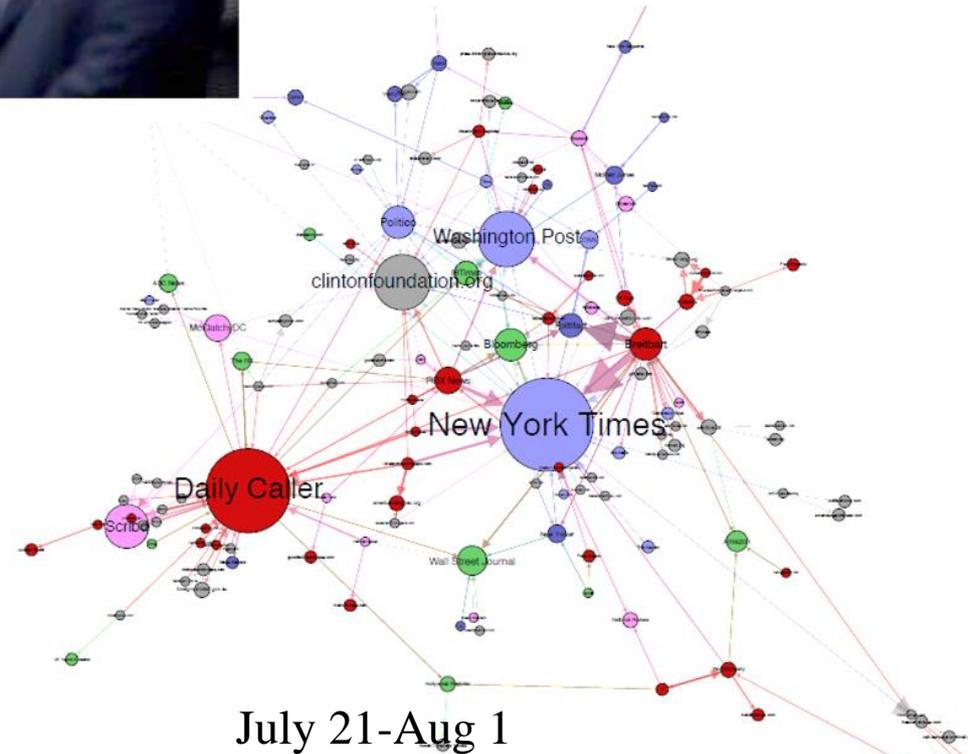
BREAKING: AP analysis: More than half those who met Clinton as Cabinet secretary gave money to Clinton Foundation.

RETWEETS 7,666 LIKES 5,754

12:24 PM - 23 Aug 2016

7.7K 5.8K

Associated Press tweet, August 23, 2016  
(deleted two weeks later)



# Disinformation & Network Propaganda

High volume, rapid, continuous, repetitive

Intentionally ignoring truth or consistency

Resistant to correction; fact checking ignored

Intentional political manipulation more important than technology

Bots, Facebook algorithm, and profiling bear further study

State actors play a role

Profit-driven “fake news” is a modest part of the problem

Core failure is embedded in politics and culture and not solely technology

Solutions are much harder than a simple technological fix

