



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

March 31, 2025

Case No. FL-2023-00013

Reed Rubinstein
America First Legal Foundation
611 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, #231
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Rubinstein:

As we noted in our letter dated February 28, 2025, we are processing your request for material under the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552. The Department of State ("Department") has identified an additional 15 responsive records subject to the FOIA. Upon review, we have determined that all 15 records may be released in part.

An enclosure explains the FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made redactions, the applicable FOIA exemptions are marked on each record. Where applicable, the Department has considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing these records and applying FOIA exemptions. All non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released and is enclosed.

We will keep you informed as your case progresses. If you have any questions, your attorney may contact Kevin Bell, U.S. Department of Justice Trial Attorney, at kevin.k.bell@usdoj.gov and (202) 305-8613. Please refer to the case number, FL-2023-00013, and the civil action number, 22-cv-03386, in all correspondence about this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Avery Bullard".

Avery Bullard
Supervisory Government Information Specialist
Litigation and Appeals Office

Enclosures: As stated.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
 - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
 - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
 - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
 - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
 - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ARMSEXP | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c) |
| CIA PERS/ORG | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g) |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS ACT | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004 |
| INA | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505 |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
 - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
 - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
 - (D) disclose confidential sources
 - (E) disclose investigation techniques
 - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
(h)(6)@bah.com>;
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>;
(h)(6)@accenturefederal.com
(h)(6)@accenturefederal.com>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Many thanks
Date: Fri, 9 Oct 2020 15:51:07 +0000

(b)(6)

The pleasure was ours. I am attaching a few reports we have produced recently to give you an idea of our capabilities. (b)(6) if you have any examples of reports you would like to share additionally, feel free to share as well.

I am also copying to this email (b)(6) our lead for USG engagement. She may assist you with getting access to GEC-IQ U5G platform.

(b)(6) if you have any requests for analysis, please relay them to (b)(6) and he will facilitate A&R engagement.

I am departing the GEC next week on October 14. (b)(6), who has been covering the emerging threats and WHA, is kindly stepping in to cover while the GEC is looking for my successor. (b)(6) will be able to answer any further questions related to Analytics and Research at the GEC.

Best,

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, October 9, 2020 11:04 AM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>; (h)(6)@bah.com>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Many thanks

(b)(6)-Many thanks for your time today. Let's keep in touch. I'll reach out in the near future.

Best,

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, October 9, 2020 4:02 PM

To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: call with GEC -- we are ON

(b)(6)

Let us know if you are still joining.

(b)(6)

Sender: (b)(6)@state.gov>
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@bah.com>;
Recipient: (b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@accenturefederal.com
(b)(6)@accenturefederal.com>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>



ONLINE MEDIA ANALYSIS

Russian-Language Twitter Conversations Support Tikhonovskaya as "Rightful Winner" in Contentious Election Despite Warnings from Russia-Affiliated Accounts

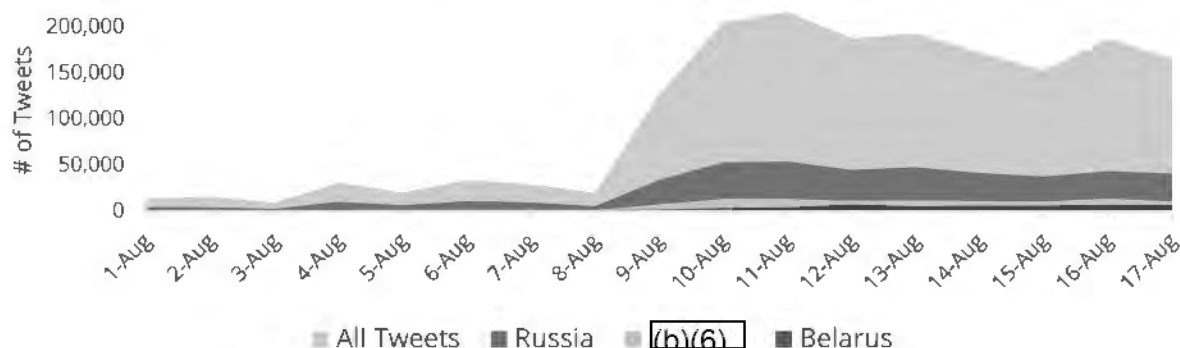
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Russian-language Twitter conversations within the Belarusian social media environment before and after the 9 August 2020 presidential election overwhelmingly supported opposition leader Svetlana Tikhonovskaya. Allegations of election manipulation were prominent after preliminary results showed incumbent presidential candidate Alexander Lukashenko winning 80% of the vote. Key influencers were largely Russian opposition figures, activists, and independent media outlets. Meanwhile, Russia-affiliated Twitter accounts shared English-language content in favor of Lukashenko—a long-time ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin—and emphasized the need for stability between Belarus and Russia. Within digital media reporting, narratives presented a positive and sympathetic tone for the anti-Lukashenko protesters who challenged the results of the election.

REPORT

Twitter Analysis: Russian-Language Conversation

The GEC analyzed Russian-language Twitter conversation related to the Belarusian presidential election posted between 1 and 17 August 2020—totaling over 1.7 million posts.¹ The majority of conversation was overwhelmingly supportive of opposition candidate Tikhonovskaya and critical of Lukashenko, a 26-year incumbent and a close Putin ally. Tweet volume peaked on 11 August, as protests grew in response to reports of election fraud, Belarusian riot police brutality, and the torture of detained protesters. Of the geotagged posts (40% of the total), the majority originated from Russia (62.6%), Ukraine (15.5%), and Belarus (7.8%). Many of the high-engagement tweets were from Russian opposition figures, independent Russian publications, and Ukrainian accounts, which drew comparisons between Belarus and the 2014 Maidan protests in Ukraine. Belarusian Telegram channel *Nexta*, Belarusian news portal *Tut.by*, and Radio Liberty affiliate, *Настоящее Время* (Current Time) also tweeted high-engagement videos of the protests.²

Daily Tweet Volume by Country



Pre-Election

The week prior to 9 August, election-related conversation averaged about 21,000 tweets per day. Multiple posts forecasted that the election might be a contentious one: a viral [video](#) capturing [audio](#) of polling station workers [practicing](#) falsifying election results; a [Nexta video](#) showing a bicyclist being detained on account of inciting a [protest](#); and another tweet reporting that cell [service](#) would be shut down in Minsk on election day.³ Conversation also focused on the [detention](#) of 33 Russian members of the Wagner Group, a paramilitary organization.⁴ One widely [shared article](#) from a Kremlin-friendly daily tabloid, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, alleged that Ukrainian intelligence officials sent the Wagner operatives—a false claim considering the Wagner Group's close ties with the Russian government.⁵ [Two other](#) popular tweets insisted that the operatives were sent by Russia, citing evidence that the same individuals participated in the 2014 Ukraine conflicts.⁶

Multiple Russian opposition accounts posted popular tweets in support of Tikhanovskaya leading up to the election: a Russian [author](#) who urged Lukashenko to step down; an anti-Putin account that praised a recent [interview](#) with Tikhanovskaya; [Lubov Sobol](#), a lawyer and opposition activist, who lamented that Tikhanovskaya was forced to leave her apartment out of concerns for safety; and anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny's press secretary [Kira Yarmych](#), who, along with exiled Russian businessman [Mikhail Khodorkovsky](#), criticized Lukashenko and Putin for not achieving their many campaign promises despite 20+ year tenures.⁷

Election Day

On 9 August, conversation jumped to 127,000 tweets, with the majority of posts questioning the validity of the election results. The top-shared video captured polling station [officials](#) alleging [removing](#) ballots through a second-story window.⁸ Other high-engagement tweets reported initial [exit poll](#) results, showing Tikhanovskaya had received around 70% of the vote.⁹ The Election Commission's preliminary count late on 9 August, however, claimed that Lukashenko received around 80% of the vote and Tikhanovskaya around 9%—resulting in [multiple popular tweets](#) calling the results fraudulent and including videos of [protesters clashing with riot police](#) throughout Belarus.¹⁰



Tweet showing video footage of ballots being removed from a second-story window.

Post-Election

In the week following, election-related conversation averaged 167,000 tweets a day as protests grew across the country. Conversation remained overwhelmingly supportive of Tikhanovskaya, with many popular tweets from Russian opposition figures, including Navalny, and independent Russian publications such as *Novaya Gazeta*. Predominant topics included: 1) reports of riot police brutality against protesters and bystanders;¹¹ 2) reports of torture of detained protesters;¹² 3) the peacefulness and courteousness of protesters;¹³ 4) workers striking in protest of Lukashenko;¹⁴ and 5) coverage of Lukashenko's past and current responses to political opposition.¹⁵

All top hashtags supported Tikhanovskaya as the rightful winner, among them: #ЛукашенкоУходи (Lukashenko Go Away) (86,000+), #ЖывеБеларусь (Long Live Belarus) (53,000+), #ЛукашенкоУбийца (Lukashenko Killer) (21,000+), and #ЛукашенкоКровавыйДиктатор (Lukashenko Bloody Dictator) (4,700+). Additionally, anti-Lukashenko tweets underscored his long dictatorial tenure by including video critiques from Boris Nemtsov—a Russian opposition politician who was assassinated in 2015—which were shared over 2,000 times.¹⁶

Throughout the week, top retweets included gruesome pictures and videos of riot police violence, and accounts of detained protesters being tortured.¹⁷ Multiple top retweets provided advice on how to safely protest, with tweets from Russian opposition figure Ilya Yashin and a Ukrainian account sharing experience from the 2014 Maidan protests.¹⁸ In response to riot police brutality, one top retweet reported on doctors in Minsk protesting the violence, while other top retweets posted pictures of riot police in an effort to “name and shame” them.¹⁹

On 11 August, a peak in conversation correlated with viral videos supportive of Tikhanovskaya. One contained audio alleging electoral fraud in Lukashenko's favor; the other announced Tikhanovskaya's decision to leave Belarus was a safety precaution.²⁰ This latter was published on Country for Life (Страна для жизни),²¹ a political opposition YouTube channel created by Tikhanovskaya's husband. A top retweet defended Tikhanovskaya's decision to leave, given the history of Lukashenko's opponents disappearing.²² A second spike occurred on 16 August, in response to the Sunday marches for and against Lukashenko: top retweets noted the lesser turnout for the pro-Lukashenko march and praised the vast turnout for the anti-Lukashenko march.²³

Authors influencing this conversation were largely Russian opposition figures and independent media outlets, who often leverage Twitter to further spread their cross-platform content. Examples include: Navalny and his colleagues' popular tweets and links to his YouTube channel Navalny Live; Russian politician Gennady Gudkov, who described the situation as ‘Lukashenko's war with the Belarusian people’ and called Tikhanovskaya the legitimate president; and *Novaya Gazeta's*, *Meduza's*, and *TV Rain's* coverage of the election and riot police brutality.²⁴ Popular anti-Putin satire accounts were influential as well: StalinGulag (famous YouTuber Alexander Gorbunov), Prof. Preobrazhensky, and Sandy Mustache.²⁵ Additionally, Belarusian Telegram channels—such as Nexta, Alexei Novosyolov, and Tea with Jam—posted very popular content within the Twitter conversation.²⁶

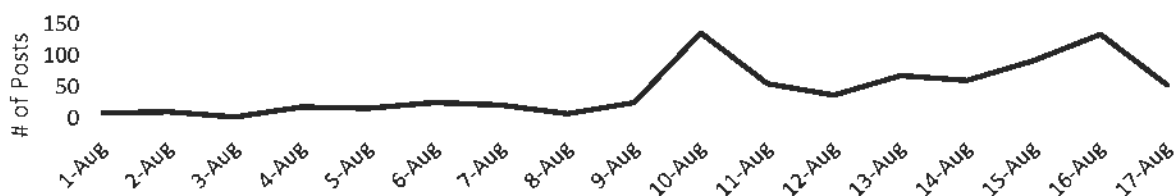
Twitter Analysis: Kremlin Response to Belarusian Protests

The GEC analyzed 767 English-language tweets from Kremlin official media and pro-Kremlin accounts which matched keywords pertaining to the Belarusian election posted between 1 and 17 August.²⁷ Of these, 17.7% (136) of posts were shared on 10 August—the day following the election—and 17.5% (134) of posts were shared on 16 August—in correlation with protest activity across the country. While the majority of these posts (53.1%; 407) were not geotagged, 22% were geotagged in Russia. Of the five most active authors observed, four (@SputnikInt, @Russ_Warrior, @SputnikMundo, @izvestia_ru) were Kremlin-official or pro-Kremlin accounts, and the fifth was Russian state media (@RT_com). These accounts made up 38.7% (297 posts) of the total conversation volume.

Overall, the English-language narrative from pro-Kremlin sources surrounding the Belarusian election leaned in favor of Lukashenko. The conversation did not contain explicit calls to action. However, tweets from Kremlin-affiliated accounts sought to undermine or discourage anti-government protesters by reminding them how Russia could easily and brutally suppress a rebellion in Belarus, and that the Belarusian working class is dependent on Russian support to survive.²⁸ The response to these claims was mixed on social media, with many Western European users expressing concern and hope for voters in Belarus.²⁹ Many posts pointed to the Maidan uprising in 2014 as a cautionary tale, urging Belarus not to follow the same path as the Ukrainians. These posts also contained anti-U.S. sentiment, particularly at the end of the reporting period, in response to the U.S. Secretary of State's criticism of Lukashenko's presidential victory.

SOCIAL MEDIA CONVERSATION OVER TIME

(English Language Tweets from Pro-Kremlin Accounts)



Prior to the election and on election day, there were very few English-language tweets from pro-Russia accounts—a total of 135 posts were shared between 1 and 9 August. Kremlin-driven reporting on the election and protests peaked on 10 August. Chatter was highest at midnight local time, as protests escalated across the country and one demonstrator was hit and killed by a truck in Minsk; at 0900 local time, as definitive official election results were disseminated internationally; and at 1400 local time, as theories connecting the protests to foreign influence began to circulate domestically.³⁰ Dominant narratives drew parallels between the protests in Minsk and the 2014 protests in Ukraine. One account called the demonstrations "déjà vu," while another implored Belarusians not to accept help from NATO or the United States.³¹ This sentiment was echoed by protesters on the ground in Minsk, according to video footage of a protester shared by pro-Russia account @Russ_warrior.³²

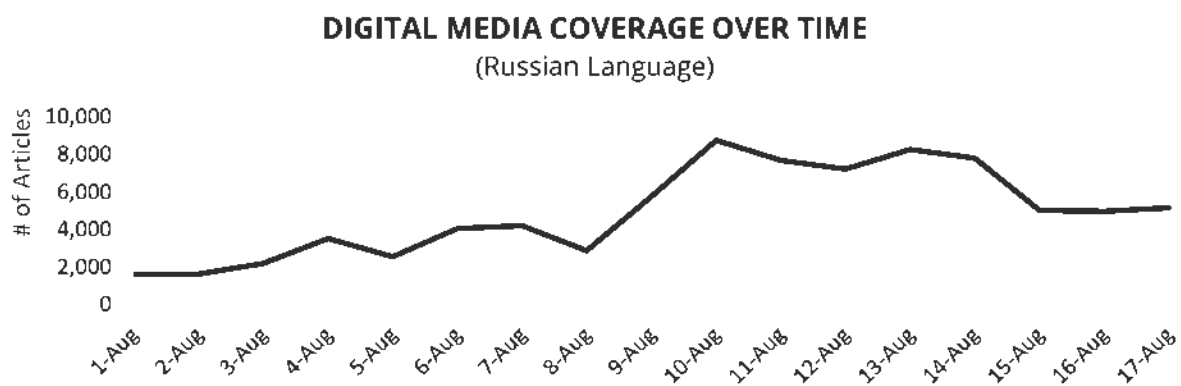
Activity declined steadily in the following days, with a smaller spike occurring on 12 and 13 August in response to news that the U.S. Secretary of State criticized the legitimacy of the election.

Unsurprisingly, Kremlin official media and pro-Kremlin accounts were overwhelmingly critical of this assessment, pointing to U.S. intervention in the aftermath of the 2014 Ukrainian election and U.S. intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan. Overall, the most shared tweet during the reporting period occurred on 12 August, and it reflected the anti-U.S. sentiment echoed by other pro-Kremlin accounts in response to the official U.S. response to the election results.³³

Tweet volume tied to pro-Kremlin coverage of the Belarusian election spiked again on 16 August, as protests continued in Minsk and Grodno. Tweets on this day consisted mostly of general reporting on both protests and counter-protests.³⁴ Anti-U.S. sentiment again persisted through criticism of the U.S. Secretary of State and of U.S. democracy in general.³⁵

Digital Media Analysis: Russian Language

Analysis of 83,172 unique Russian-language digital media articles about the Belarusian presidential election displayed a similar pattern to that of social media. Coverage spiked on 10 August and maintained a high volume until 15 August, with nearly 50% of total volume occurring during that time. Most media coverage (54.2%) was produced in Russia, followed by Ukraine, (17.9%) and then Belarus (8.8%). Despite the high volume of publications from Russia, the most shared media during the reporting period came from Belarus and France, and the overall narratives portrayed a positive and sympathetic tone towards anti-government protesters.



Prior to election day, the most widely disseminated article (the third-most shared article throughout the entire reporting period) was a report from a popular, Kremlin-friendly Russian tabloid claiming that the 33 Russians—alleged operatives from the paramilitary group Wagner who were detained and later released in Belarus—was a provocation arranged by Ukrainian intelligence officials.³⁶ This was shared 1,563 times across social media platforms. The second-most widely shared article addressed a separate topic altogether, reporting that over 12,000 Belarusians gathered across the country for Tikhonovskaya's campaign rally one week before election day. It was shared 1,515 times.

On 9 August, digital media was dominated by election coverage. However, after polls closed, reporting on election results and exit polls was eclipsed by coverage of the rapidly escalating protests.³⁷

Post-election coverage with high readership pertained mostly to the protests in Minsk. The two most shared articles (shared 7,129 and 5,177 times respectively), published on 15 and 16 August, detailed graphic police violence aimed at protesters and detainees in Belarus.³⁸ These reports of Belarusian police brutality were punctuated by a light-hearted story of police standing in solidarity with protesters, which was shared 1,203 times.³⁹ Although Russian media outlets produced a higher volume of Russian-language digital media during this time, headlines from Belarus, France, and Ukraine received the most shares. Of the top headlines originating in Russia, all were from Russian state or pro-Kremlin sources, highlighting Lukashenko's request for support from President Putin.⁴⁰

ANALYST COMMENT: Developments in Belarus are driven by the internal dynamics of the Belarusian peoples' response to the electoral fraud and police violence. By asking for Russia's help, Lukashenko has turned the situation into a geopolitical issue. Independent media in Belarus that the Belarusian regime might have hired Russian PR specialists to run its "people's support" campaign.⁴¹ The campaign "ЯБацька" is gaining momentum in creating the appearance of overwhelming public support for Lukashenko with stickers, flash mobs, and promotional materials. Cars with Russian license plates have been observed among processions of cars displaying red and green flags in support of Lukashenko. Mixed messaging regarding Belarus from Russian domestic media and international-facing outlets suggests the Kremlin's official line is still developing.

We would appreciate your feedback by completing a short survey here.

References

¹ Total volume was 1,778,411. Tweets from the United States were excluded from analysis.

² https://twitter.com/nexta_tv, <https://twitter.com/tutby>, <https://twitter.com/currenttimetv>

³ <https://twitter.com/adagamov/status/1292060748362002438>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3osnc2RX1Cg&feature=youtu.be>, <https://twitter.com/belamova/status/1291995191268782080>, <https://twitter.com/StalinGulag/status/1292056151727759360>, https://twitter.com/Kira_Yarmysh/status/1291831624439681027, https://twitter.com/gudkov_g/status/1292181404965642243

⁴ <https://twitter.com/rosbaltru/status/1289620669886418944>

⁵ <https://twitter.com/sashakots/status/1291486564154068992>, <https://www.kp.ru/daily/217165/4266019/>, <https://twitter.com/sashakots/status/1291486564154068992>,

⁶ <https://twitter.com/vogonjpravdy/status/1289766793809137667>, https://twitter.com/S_vivat/status/1289893739654250497

⁷ <https://twitter.com/apiontkovsky/status/1289564093674713089>, <https://twitter.com/ChiefLiberal/status/1291253509392916480>, <https://twitter.com/SobolLubov/status/1292177084798967809>, https://twitter.com/Kira_Yarmysh/status/1290602552107687937, <https://twitter.com/mich261213/status/1291124055387582466>

⁸ <https://twitter.com/novosyolov/status/1292398300952502274>, <https://twitter.com/msvetov/status/1292404339965911041>

⁹ <https://twitter.com/TheresNoFate/status/1292470370835017729>, <https://twitter.com/YmeedyEsomk43ls/status/1292480278905212930>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/eschulmann/status/1292523619046891520>, https://twitter.com/_tomato_hater/status/1292518024910704643, <https://twitter.com/sadmikalai/status/1292513521914322946>, <https://twitter.com/tutby/status/1292538957440389126>, <https://twitter.com/StalinGulag/status/1292553627807219713>, <https://twitter.com/StalinGulag/status/1292573774613827584>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/OBonkof/status/1294196311491784706>, <https://twitter.com/StalinGulag/status/1294679444318294016>, https://twitter.com/cho_tu_psihyesh/status/1293864925585117184

¹² <https://twitter.com/naulny/status/1294012593334558720>, <https://twitter.com/CurrentTimeTv/status/1295441251987226624>

¹³ https://twitter.com/red_ya_bastard/status/1294031801292398594, <https://twitter.com/tutby/status/1295012013362556934>, <https://twitter.com/DerArto/status/129418866788941826>, <https://twitter.com/sadmikalai/status/1294187611322560512>, <https://twitter.com/melkoridze/status/1294162110549811200>

¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/StalinGulag/status/1293893905780551685>, <https://twitter.com/SotaVision/status/1294594440540098566>

¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/CurrentTimeTv/status/1294891390984388608>, <https://twitter.com/belamova/status/1295335148024664064>, <https://twitter.com/novosyolov/status/1295370819393265665>

¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/digma28/status/1295150770703290368>, https://twitter.com/Sandy_mustache/status/1293411894234030082, https://twitter.com/Nemtsov_most/status/1295483960462639105

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/novosyolov/status/1293832495096619009>, <https://twitter.com/AxionArinin/status/1293300494774001665>, https://twitter.com/dw_russian/status/1294678493725446147, <https://twitter.com/naulny/status/1293830378294255616>, https://twitter.com/znak_com/status/1293570325335150592

¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/stvrryttear/status/1293304200756178944>, https://twitter.com/hey_mr_jay/status/1293039308769812486, <https://twitter.com/IlyaYashin/status/1293466606182502400>, <https://twitter.com/imdominofoxy/status/1292598673319309312>

¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/CurrentTimeTv/status/1293788121406910464>, <https://twitter.com/patriotbelarus2/status/1293648121260650497>, <https://twitter.com/vorchunya21veka/status/1295381150354022405>, https://twitter.com/_i_loveyou3000/status/1293564018091794433

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/adagamov/status/1293117038014214149>, <https://twitter.com/CurrentTimeTv/status/1293223148679122946>, <https://twitter.com/belteanews/status/1293140528545095680>, <https://twitter.com/naulny/status/1293115286112088064>

²¹ The Country for Life (Страна для жизни) YouTube channel has been used for official messaging for Tikhonovskaya's campaign, and most recently for direct addresses from the exiled leader, including a request for Belarus citizens to recast their ballots via Google Forms and an appeal to the EU for assistance. Link to channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFPC7r3tWWXWzUIROLx46mg>

²² <https://twitter.com/igiss/status/1293138788433178624>

²³ <https://twitter.com/akozenko/status/1295002808203259904>, https://twitter.com/nexta_tv/status/1294986198813937665, https://twitter.com/A_Vit/status/1294981868761341952, https://twitter.com/Fake_MIDRF/status/1294985197163884547

- ²⁴ <https://twitter.com/navalny/status/1294316859265884164>, <https://twitter.com/SobolLubov/status/1293135426136547328>, <https://twitter.com/navalnylive/status/1292547699825422339>, <https://twitter.com/navalnylive/status/1292540820462206976>, https://twitter.com/gudkov_g/status/1293656497914892288, https://twitter.com/gudkov_g/status/1294567820777398272, https://twitter.com/novaya_gazeta/status/1294587164504788993, <https://twitter.com/meduzaproject/status/1294998728051511297>, <https://twitter.com/tvrain/status/1292571847775653891>
- ²⁵ <https://twitter.com/StalinGulag/status/1293512010995568640>, https://twitter.com/prof_preobr/status/1293583763197300736, https://twitter.com/Sandy_mustache/status/1293411894234030082
- ²⁶ https://twitter.com/nexta_tv/status/1292961915648565255, <https://twitter.com/novosyolov/status/1295057483766083584>, <https://twitter.com/belteanews/status/1295276950571843585>
- ²⁷ The GEC analyzed English-language tweets from the following Twitter users: @sputnik_fr; @sputnik_insight; @sputnik_tr; @sputnikellada; @sputnikint; @sputnikmundo; @sputniknewskz; @state_duma; @tassagency_en; @uac_russia_eng; @ukrsgv; @underground_rt; @watchinghawks; @worldsapart_rt; @zvezda_int; @zvezdanews; @russ_warrior; @timand2037; @caitoz; @georgegalloway; @rtuknews; @rt_com; @crg_crm; @rtenfrancais; @fnnewsfront; @ennewsfront; @underground_rt; @rt_sputnik; @rs_sputnik; @orthodoxe; @rt_russian; @sputnikmajmaj; @newsfrontsrbiija; @tass_agency; @russianinsight; @rianru; @kpru; @izvestia_ru; @geopoliticaesp; @fortrussnews; @middleeastmnt; @drjackrasmus; @russiabeyond; @tfl1728; @jonathan_k_cook; @alanrmadeod; @scottshumor; @bhadrapunchline; @wmrdc; @3arabisouri; @oulosp; @philipgiralddi; @matalliano; @craigmurrayorg; @colin_todhunter; @ejmalrai; @oulousp; @mhughes192_mark; @notfarmerwife; @mowoodd; @obscureshadow3; @vhcracer; @turnie3; @lovedomine; @fedorsblog; @standtallnroar; @shinobi22427722; @humbert63380549; @giannitruvianni; @mensaandproud1; @geromanat; @luisbrito96; @ollisia; @dyernychuk; @bursuk; @djsiri; @occupyschagen; @andrevltchek; @eduardoenlared; @malagurski; @erikaosanoja; @oannews; @oksanaboyko; @raniakhalek; @josenegrony; @vanessabeeley; @evakbartlett; @keiserreport; @juantamayo; @ivorcrotty; @buenrostrjayjer; @rt_america; @carlosmartinezr; @mfa_russia.
- ²⁸ https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1294921082915479557?s=20; https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1295352946918555649?s=20
- ²⁹ https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1295352946918555649?s=20
- ³⁰ http://twitter.com/RT_com/status/1292573375462858757; https://twitter.com/RT_com/status/1292577888580112385?s=20; <http://twitter.com/notfarmerwife/status/1292712361636184064>; <http://twitter.com/SputnikInt/status/1292781207005077504>
- ³¹ https://twitter.com/Dpol_un/status/1292597142239027202?s=20; <https://twitter.com/VeraVanHorne/status/1294740995725242368?s=20>
- ³² https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1294942533353721857?s=20
- ³³ <https://twitter.com/sahouraxo/status/1293609356060106753?s=20>
- ³⁴ https://twitter.com/RT_com/status/1294801046456479745?s=20; https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1294921082915479557?s=20; https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1294935802456215553?s=20
- ³⁵ https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1293846295153651713?s=20; <https://twitter.com/AngieSkys/status/1295055724016533505?s=20>
- ³⁶ <https://www.kp.ru/daily/217165/4266019/>
- ³⁷ <https://www.belta.by/society/view/obnarodovany-rezultaty-natsionalnogo-exit-poll-na-vyborah-prezidenta-402203-2020/>; https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/prjamaja_transljatsija_vybory_prezidenta_bearusi_tekstovyy_onlajn-514011/
- ³⁸ <https://news.tut.by/society/696650.html>; <https://www.znak.com/2020-08-12/prprpl>
- ³⁹ <https://news.tut.by/society/696650.html>; <https://www.znak.com/2020-08-12/prprpl>; <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/stylar/rasstrelivali-ostanovkah-vytaskivali-avto-1597209801.html>; <https://www.jpost.com/international/belarus-detainees-piled-in-concentration-camp-as-jails-run-out-of-room-638416>
- ⁴⁰ <https://gordonua.com/news/worldnews/okruzhenie-lukashenko-kontaktirovalo-s-kremlem-o-vozmozhnosti-begstva-v-rossiyu-bloomberg-1513817.html>; <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-dogovorilsja-s-putinyem-rossija-pri-pervom-zaprose-okazhet-pomosch-po-obespecheniju-402964-2020/>
- ⁴¹ <https://twitter.com/symbolby/status/1296892883446964231>

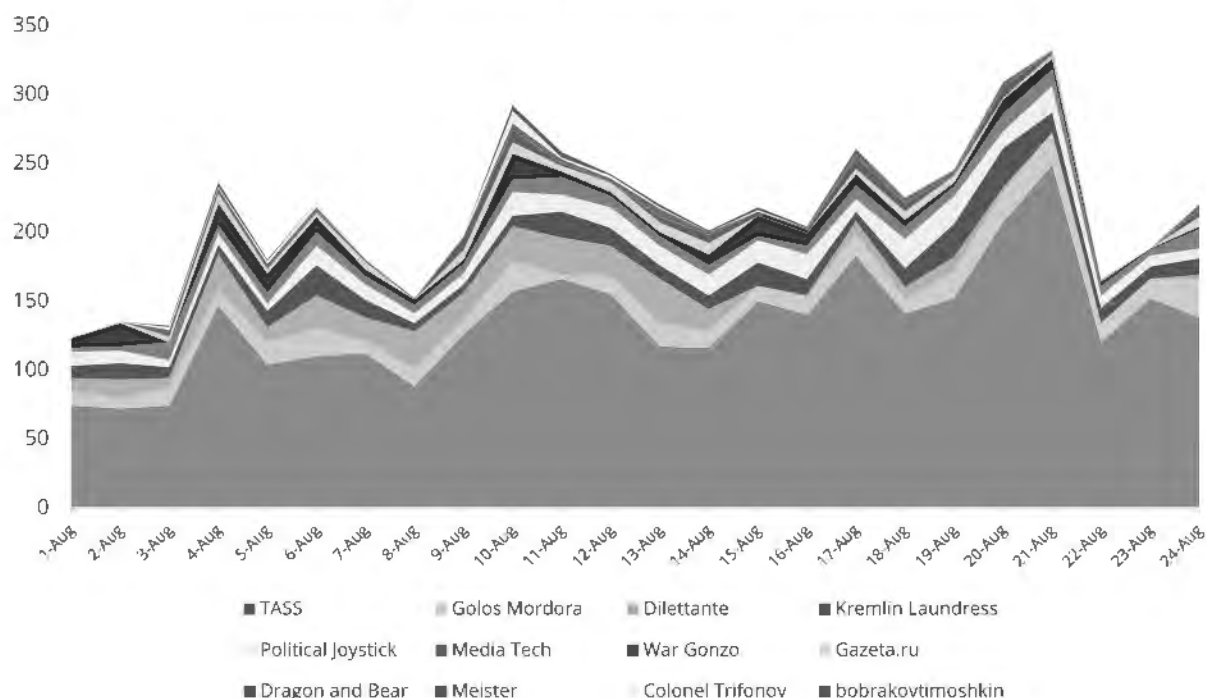
ONLINE MEDIA ANALYSIS

Belarusian Election Update: Pro-Kremlin Telegram Channels Actively Promote Kremlin Official Storyline, Develop Kremlin-Friendly Online Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Narrative analysis of 91,680 posts from popular pro-Kremlin Telegram channels identified five overarching themes: 1) incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko is the legitimate winner of the election, 2) politically, Belarus is unstable and the opposition is unorganized, 3) the West is assisting the Belarusian protesters and opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhonovskaya for geopolitical gains, 4) Navalny was not poisoned by the Kremlin, and 5) Russia has created the first approved COVID-19 vaccine. These 12 pro-Kremlin channels frequently shared each other's posts, as well as requests to follow each other and similar channels, suggesting an effort to grow the pro-Kremlin community on Telegram.

REPORT

The GEC analyzed 91,680 Telegram posts from 12 known pro-Kremlin Telegram channels posted between 1 and 24 August 2020.¹ Spikes in volume coincided with the Belarusian presidential election (9-10 August) and the continuing protests the following weekend (16-17 August). Another major spike occurred in response to the suspected poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny (20-21 August). Among the Telegram channels analyzed, we estimate that the most influential are Meister, War Gonzo, and Political Joystick, given their high average views per post and large numbers of subscribers.²

Daily Posting Volume of Pro-Kremlin Telegram Channels


Narrative Analysis

1. Lukashenko Won the Election Legitimately

Pro-Kremlin channels insisted that Lukashenko won the election legitimately.³ Prior to the election, posts dismissed early polls that showed Tikhonovskaya in the lead.⁴ On election day, posts cited sources claiming Lukashenko received around 80% of the vote.⁵ Channels also used posts congratulating Lukashenko on behalf of China and Russia as evidence that the election results were legitimate.⁶ Any refusal of the results was ascribed to Western interventionism, discussed below.⁷

2. The Political Situation in Belarus is Unstable, and Protesters are Unorganized

A common narrative was the instability in Belarus, even before the 9 August election. Multiple channels forecasted that the Lukashenko opposition would protest no matter the election result, and that Belarusian armed forces were preparing for unrest.⁸ In the protest-filled week following the election, these channels aimed to discredit protesters. Highly viewed posts by Kremlin Laundress, Political Joystick, and Media Tech painted the protesters as unorganized and uncommitted youth who questioned the status quo.⁹ TASS shared Lukashenko's statement describing protesters as criminals, while Political Joystick posted a video in which two detained protesters admitted to having served time in jail.¹⁰ War Gonzo presented an overall chaotic view of Belarus: frequently reporting on the violence of the protests, the shutting down of cell service, and the "large-scale strikes" across industries.¹¹ Meister argued that Belarusian workers undermined their own interests by striking.¹²

3. The West is Intervening in Belarusian Protests for Political Gain

Generally skeptical of Western influence, these channels frequently alleged foreign intervention in Belarus.¹³ Meister claimed that EU members offered to help Lukashenko maintain power in exchange for political favors. Media Tech, TASS, and Dilettante implied that European countries refused to recognize the election results for geopolitical gains, calling it a "Venezuelan result."¹⁴ Some posts accused Ukraine of organizing protests; others accused Poland.¹⁵ Multiple channels suggested that Belarus would become an East-West geopolitical struggle, similar to Ukraine in 2014.¹⁶ Meister and Dilettante also criticized Belarus's Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei's friendly relationships with U.S. and EU officials, speculating that "Western circles" would support his political rise in Belarus.¹⁷ Kremlin Laundress claimed that the West needed Belarus as "buffer zone" for Russia congratulating the Russian media for minimizing the "influence of Western special services."¹⁸

4. Navalny's Suspected Poisoning

These channels also tended to reject the theory that the Kremlin was involved in Navalny's a poisoning on 20 August. Multiple channels claimed that Navalny's sickness arose from alcohol abuse.¹⁹ In highly viewed posts, Golos Mordora refuted both a physician's poisoning diagnosis and that Navalny would receive better care outside Russia.^{20, 21} Colonel Trifonov argued that the Kremlin gained nothing from poisoning Navalny, as it could impede him with legal maneuvers.²² Other channels, meanwhile, proposed a variety of potential suspects for the poisoning, including: "Russia's geopolitical opponents," "foreign curators," Ukraine," and "Navalny's associates."²³

5. Russia's Sputnik V COVID-19 Vaccine and the Efremov Trial

Beyond coverage of the Belarusian election and Navalny, the pro-Kremlin channels messaged positively around the announcement of Russia's Sputnik V, the first approved COVID-19 vaccine.²⁴ Kremlin Laundress defended critiques of the early vaccine announcement by citing Russia's history of developing vaccines and the large number of volunteer trial patients.²⁵ Political Joystick admitted that the "propaganda effect" of having the first COVID-19 vaccine was advantageous for Russia.²⁶ Another popular topic was the trial of Mikhail Efremov, a Russian actor and Kremlin critic, accused of a fatal DUI in Moscow.²⁷ Pro-Kremlin channels criticized Efremov's claims that he was not driving the car and called the trial a circus.²⁸

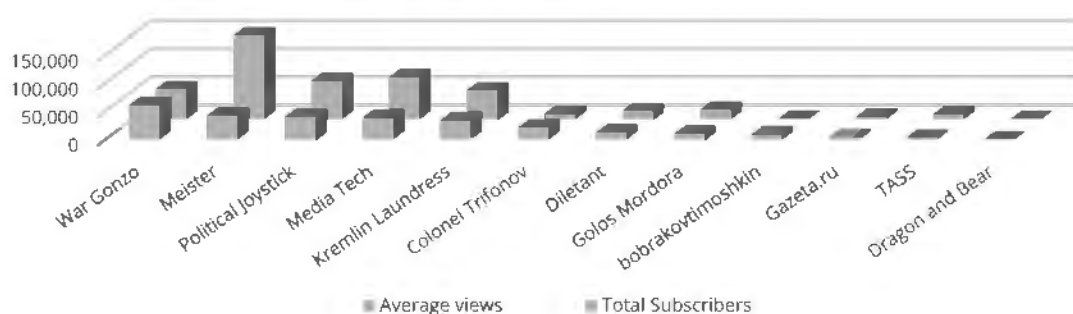
Channel Analysis

Of the 12 pro-Kremlin channels, we assess that the most influential are Meister, War Gonzo, and Political Joystick, given their high average views per post and large numbers of subscribers. Russian state news agency TASS had the highest daily volume of all channels, but the second lowest viewership on average.

MOST VIEWS PER POST (AVG)	MOST SUBSCRIBERS	HIGHEST VOLUME OF POSTS
War Gonzo	Meister	TASS
@wargonzo	@maester	@tass_agency
53,293 Subscribers	148,731 Subscribers	8,790 subscribers
60.8k views per post	42.1k views per post	3.7k views per post
178 posts*	58 posts*	3,250 posts*

**total number of posts created by the user between 1 and 24 August 2020. Data from tgstat.ru. Accessed 25 August 2020.*

Average Views and Total Subscribers



Data from tgstat.ru and individual Telegram channels. Accessed on 25 August 2020.

Multiple channels experienced increases in followers during the reporting period: War Gonzo had an increase of 12,000 subscribers and TASS an increase of 5,000. While Meister initially experienced a rise in followers, the channel lost subscribers between 19 and 24 August. We also observed channels sharing each other's posts, requesting channels follow them, and providing lists of other like-minded channels to follow, suggesting an effort to grow the pro-Kremlin community on Telegram.²⁹

ANALYST COMMENT: This analysis of thousands of Telegram posts demonstrates how the political messaging used by pro-Kremlin channels is in sync with official Kremlin propaganda messaging. These Telegram channels serve as a convenient mouthpiece for the Kremlin, by boosting its official position on important issues and by regularly attacking or praising the same figures that are attacked or praised by Russian-state channels. Despite being blocked by Russian authorities in 2018, Telegram remained the country's third most popular mobile messaging app after WhatsApp and Viber and managed to increase its audience from 2.2 million to 3.7 million users.³⁰ In June 2020, Russia lifted the ban on Telegram after finding it unsuccessful.³¹ It appears the Kremlin has changed tactics—no longer attempting to censor the messaging app, but rather using it to its advantage by capitalizing on Telegram's growing audience.

We would appreciate your feedback by completing a short survey here.

References

¹ The GEC analyzed Telegram data from the following user channels: @tass_agency; @golosmordora; @the_diletant; @kremlinprachka; @politjoystic; @mediatech; @wargonzo; @gazetaru; @dragonandbear; @maester; @polkovnik; @bobrakovtimoshka.

² For previous GEC reporting on the Belarusian presidential election and Russia's COVID-19 vaccine development, see "Russian-Language Twitter Conversations Support Tikhonovskaya as 'Rightful Winner' in Contentious Election Despite Warnings from Russia-Affiliated Accounts," GEC2020-EUR-222 and Russia-Linked Accounts Allege Russia's Progress in the Global COVID-19 Vaccine Race," GEC2020-GBL-751.

³ For previous GEC reporting on the Belarusian presidential election, see "Russian-Language Twitter Conversations Support Tikhonovskaya as 'Rightful Winner' in Contentious Election Despite Warnings from Russia-Affiliated Accounts," GEC2020-EUR-222.

⁴ <https://t.me/mediatech/10241>

⁵ <https://t.me/mediatech/10242>, https://t.me/tass_agency/13679, <https://t.me/politjoystic/15891>

⁶ https://t.me/tass_agency/13740, https://t.me/tass_agency/13750, <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9342>, <https://t.me/mediatech/10249>

⁷ <https://t.me/politjoystic/15883>

⁸ https://t.me/the_diletant/2177, https://t.me/tass_agency/13627, https://t.me/the_diletant/2213, <https://t.me/wargonzo/3189>

⁹ <https://t.me/mediatech/10323>, <https://t.me/politjoystic/15900>, <https://t.me/politjoystic/15885>, <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9429>

¹⁰ https://t.me/tass_agency/14126, <https://t.me/politjoystic/15921>

¹¹ <https://t.me/wargonzo/3224>, <https://t.me/wargonzo/3231>

¹² <https://t.me/maester/1619>

¹³ <https://t.me/maester/1594>, <https://t.me/mediatech/10356>, <https://t.me/bobrakovtimoshkin/1827>

¹⁴ <https://t.me/mediatech/10317>, https://t.me/tass_agency/14760, https://t.me/the_diletant/2165, <https://t.me/mediatech/10322>

¹⁵ <https://t.me/bobrakovtimoshkin/1824>, <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9450>, <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9528>,

<https://t.me/mediatech/10320>

¹⁶ <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9438>

¹⁷ <https://t.me/maester/1631>, https://t.me/the_diletant/2407, https://t.me/the_diletant/2290

¹⁸ <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9336>, <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9400>

¹⁹ <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9491>, <https://t.me/mediatech/10330>, <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9529>, <https://t.me/politjoystic/16072>

²⁰ The channel name 'Golos Mordora' (Cyrillic: Голос Мордора) translates to 'Voice of Mordor' in English

²¹ <https://t.me/golosmordora/4934>, <https://twitter.com/DrAnastasy/status/129632852097788934?s=20>,

<https://t.me/golosmordora/4937>, <https://twitter.com/aavst/status/1296329461164576775?s=20>

²² <https://t.me/polkovnik/244>

²³ <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9519>, <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9519>, <https://t.me/mediatech/10325>, <https://t.me/mediatech/10373>

²⁴ For previous GEC reporting on Russia's COVID-19 vaccine, see "Russia-Linked Accounts Allege Russia's Progress in the Global COVID-19 Vaccine Race," GEC2020-GBL-751. <https://t.me/bobrakovtimoshka/1821>, https://t.me/tass_agency/13952,

https://t.me/tass_agency/13915

²⁵ <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9381>, <https://t.me/kremlinprachka/9369>

²⁶ <https://t.me/politjoystic/15920>

²⁷ <https://t.me/polkovnik/222>

²⁸ <https://t.me/politjoystic/16082>; <https://t.me/gazetaru/838>;

²⁹ <https://t.me/politjoystic/16094>, https://t.me/the_diletant/2416, https://t.me/the_diletant/2364, https://t.me/the_diletant/2236

³⁰ <https://investforesight.com/telegram-remains-in-top-3-messenger-apps-in-russia/>

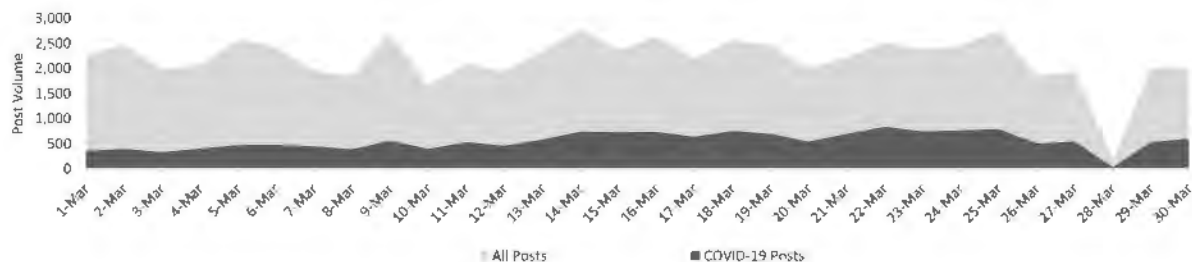
³¹ <https://apnews.com/1da061ce00eb531291b143ace0eed1c9>

ONLINE MEDIA ANALYSIS:**Russia-Linked Amplifiers Promote Pro-Chinese Narratives Across Italy's Twitter Landscape****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

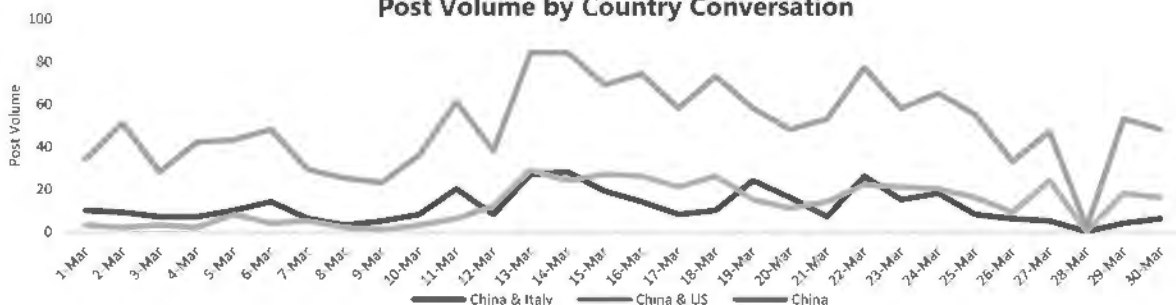
Russia-linked accounts amplify content promoting pro-Chinese narratives, including retweets from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Chinese government media outlet the *Global Times*, to Italian audiences. However, coverage of China was not singularly positive; criticism was present as well. This is consistent with Russia's approach to propaganda and disinformation: propagate various and contradicting narratives in order to spread confusion and promote distrust in the government and media. Additionally, conversations also focused on disparaging US, EU, and NATO efforts in combating COVID-19.

REPORT:**Social Media Analysis**

The GEC analyzed tweets originating from 18 Twitter accounts identified as Russia state-operated and Russia-linked amplifiers within Italy's Twitter conversations. Between 1 March and 30 March 2020, total volume of posts from these accounts was 65,600, with approximately 25% (16,600 posts) related to COVID-19.

Total Post Volume

Within the COVID-19 tweets, we analyzed the posts mentioning China and Italy (2.1%), China and the United States (2.3%), and China more broadly (9%).

Post Volume by Country Conversation

Narrative: China is Italy's Main Ally; the EU and NATO Abandoned Italy

The most common pro-China narrative identified was related to China's aid to Italy, and included claims that China was Italy's main ally in the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ The tweet amplified by China's MFA spokesperson shared a video which claimed that Chinese National Anthem was played in the streets as China's doctors arrived in Italy.^{2,3} The video was later debunked by an Italian fact-checking organization as fake.

Within this narrative, tweets claimed that the United States, EU, and NATO had "abandoned" Italy, that EU solidarity was weakening, and that Italy was considering leaving the EU.⁴ A video, in which Milan residents expressed disappointment towards the EU, was shared multiple times.⁵ The tweet pictured here contains an anti-EU cartoon which summarizes this narrative well.⁶ In addition to China, tweets often praised Cuba, Russia and Venezuela for their assistance to Italy.⁷

The accounts amplified China's supply of ventilators,⁸ masks, and sending medical experts.⁹ In contrast, the EU and its member states are viewed as villains for not "sharing medical assistance like other countries – China and Russia."¹⁰



Narrative: Criticism of the United States

The most common narrative observed centered around U.S. sanctions. Tweets criticized the U.S. for enforcing sanctions Iran and other countries,¹¹ while China, Russia, and Cuba provided medical aid to Italy and the world.¹² A related narrative criticized NATO in tandem with the United States for not doing enough to Italy.¹³ An emerging narrative that the US is taking medical equipment from other countries was found as well, with at least four tweets reporting that the US flew testing kits from Italy to Tennessee.¹⁴

Narrative: The Czech Republic Confiscated Italian Masks

In March 2020, the Czech government confiscated masks and respirators when a Czech company tried to sell them twice its original value to the Czech Health Ministry. It was revealed that the supplies were meant for Italy as the Red Cross donation. The false narrative quickly surfaced amplified by the Russia-linked accounts, accused the Czech Republic in seizing supplies meant for Italy.¹⁵ These accounts are making an active effort to undermine NATO and EU solidarity.¹⁶

Narrative: Criticism of Italian Government

Other topics within the China-Italy conversation included criticism of the Italian government's response to the pandemic,¹⁷ Italians' reluctance to cooperate with China, as well as mistrust of immigrants in Italy who were accused of spreading the virus and receiving outsized welfare benefits.¹⁸

Narrative: COVID-19 Origin

Our dataset revealed three different origin narratives, with the virus claimed to be from a lab in the United States, from a lab in China, and from Italy.

The U.S.-origin narrative was propagated by at least six of the 18 analyzed accounts, using both original posts and retweets. Variations of the narrative included: a Czech biologist claimed that COVID-19 was made in U.S. lab; COVID-19 was patented from a U.S. biological warfare lab; Taiwan and Japan agreed that COVID-19 originated in the United States; Chinese officials claimed that COVID-19 was a U.S. bioweapon; and China is engaged in a "hybrid war" with the United States.¹⁹

At least five accounts retweeted posts that claimed that COVID-19 originated from China or even suspected it was lab-made in China.

A smaller pro-China narrative suggesting that Italy was the origin of the virus included screenshots of a *Global Times* tweet.²⁰ Reactions to this narrative were largely negative and often mocked China for trying to blame both the United States and Italy.

Narrative: Focus on China

Within the broader China conversation, multiple pro-China narratives were identified. China's successful containment of COVID-19 within its own country was praised.²¹ The anti-stigma narrative was identified, with retweets of a China MFA Spokesperson and *Global Times* editor, when he asked to "keep racism away" from pandemic.²² *Sputnik's* article claimed China had been defamed during the pandemic.²³

Not all tweets were supportive of China. In addition to tweets on China as the virus origin, a Hong Kong reporter was retweeted, who discussed how China sought to "wrest control of the narrative."²⁴

ANALYST COMMENT: None.

¹ https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1237718610044432385

² Whether the Chinese Anthem actually was played is under question (see CEPA conference March 27)

³ <https://twitter.com/zlj517/status/1239111323088121858>; <https://twitter.com/zlj517/status/1239112822908276736>

⁴ https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1236259058308583425; <https://twitter.com/bopanc/status/1240380714769670148>;

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<https://twitter.com/vtchakarova/status/1238952369188155392>;

<https://twitter.com/l30mki/status/1240526844727676928>

⁵ https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1242785378714689537

⁶ <https://twitter.com/manimahesh1991/status/1238477952204996609>

⁷ <https://twitter.com/redfishstream/status/1244602457193426944>; https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1242011983202959360;

<https://twitter.com/GaleWoo41521620/status/1243420815665672194>

⁸ Despite the prolific messaging on China's "donation" of ventilators suggests that it is humanitarian aid, experts have pointed out that China has sold ventilators to Italy, not donated them. Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/30/russia-china-coronavirus-geopolitics/>

⁹ <https://twitter.com/Comunardo/status/1237392893221859331>; <https://twitter.com/arkinentuuli/status/1240942327725797379>;

<https://twitter.com/XHNNews/status/1242813234735804416>;

<https://twitter.com/chenweihua/status/1238464800939745280>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/PatriotSerbian/status/1241760317413167107>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/HadiNasrallah/status/1242261092849639431>;

¹² https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1240238570608168960; https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1240238570608168960;

<https://twitter.com/sahouraxo/status/1242094709549531137>; <https://twitter.com/sahouraxo/status/1242166618639216640>

¹³ <https://twitter.com/ncambirwa/status/1241738202530136065>

¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/Malinka1102/status/1240317073915555845>; <https://twitter.com/MarcoRizzoPC/status/1240395402081435654>;

¹⁵ <https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/11977-czech-seizes-chinese-masks-some-diverted-from-italy>

¹⁶ We found several accounts amplifying the same narrative: <https://twitter.com/yarotrof/status/1237453505532776449>,

<https://twitter.com/RussiaSarPNR/status/1242428752690372615>

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/Alex70Fa/status/1242411968067244032>; <https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1241801646688141314>;

<https://twitter.com/RadioSavana/status/1241740205750697985>; <https://twitter.com/ilprofessore87/status/1241685871184744448>

¹⁸ https://twitter.com/claudio_2022/status/1234174329610436613; <https://twitter.com/gabrillasarti2/status/1235964864658649088>

¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/GaleWoo41521620/status/1244573038546386945>;

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²⁰ <https://twitter.com/VivienneChow/status/1241709615512842241>; <https://twitter.com/captainsacks/status/1242045163372818432>;

<https://twitter.com/FrancescoBechis/status/1241692368316874752>;

<https://twitter.com/globaltimesnews/status/1241559268190343168>

²¹ <https://twitter.com/SputnikInt/status/1240464257105313793>; https://twitter.com/Russ_Warrior/status/1237351520917770241

²² <https://twitter.com/zlj517/status/1242468282814226437>; https://twitter.com/HuXijin_GT/status/1244581771116593152

²³ <https://twitter.com/SputnikInt/status/1244081845442154497>

²⁴ <https://twitter.com/joshuawongcf/status/1239018718044155904>;

<https://twitter.com/kunlun20131416/status/1242897918920740864>;

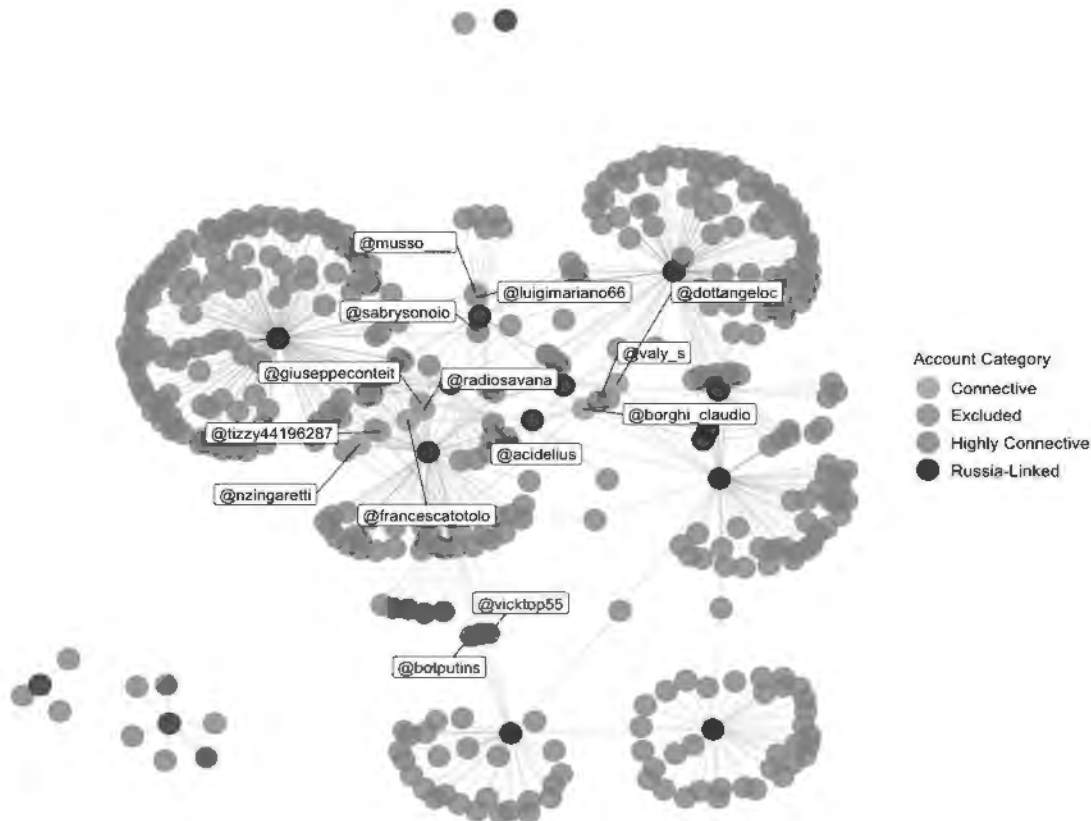
<https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1242875894387138563>; <https://twitter.com/maryhui/status/1240243136464478211>

COVID-19 REPORTING:**Russia-linked Inorganic Activity on COVID-19 Present in Italian Social Media****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The GEC analyzed tweets from 18 accounts identified as Russia-linked amplifiers to understand their connectivity within Italy's social media environment. The account handle @51fini is likely the most central and influential within the dataset. The users @vicktop55, @BotPutins, and @Russ_Warrior were all frequently retweeted by the Russia-linked accounts @peterbojecky and @marizar ud.¹ Two accounts appear suspicious: (1) @BotPutins, a self-identified semi-automated account that retweets pro-Russian and anti-U.S. propaganda, and (2) @vicktop55, an account that tweets pro-Russia content in Russian and anti-U.S. content in English. Due to the co-retweeting patterns of these accounts, it's plausible that they are both managed by the same agent or bot algorithm.

REPORT***Social Media Influencer Analysis Overview***

Using data gathered from 30,000 tweets posted in March 2020, the Global Engagement Center (GEC) depicted a network where the nodes are comprised of Russia-linked Twitter accounts—known disseminators of COVID-19-related disinformation—and the accounts tagged in their tweets and retweets.

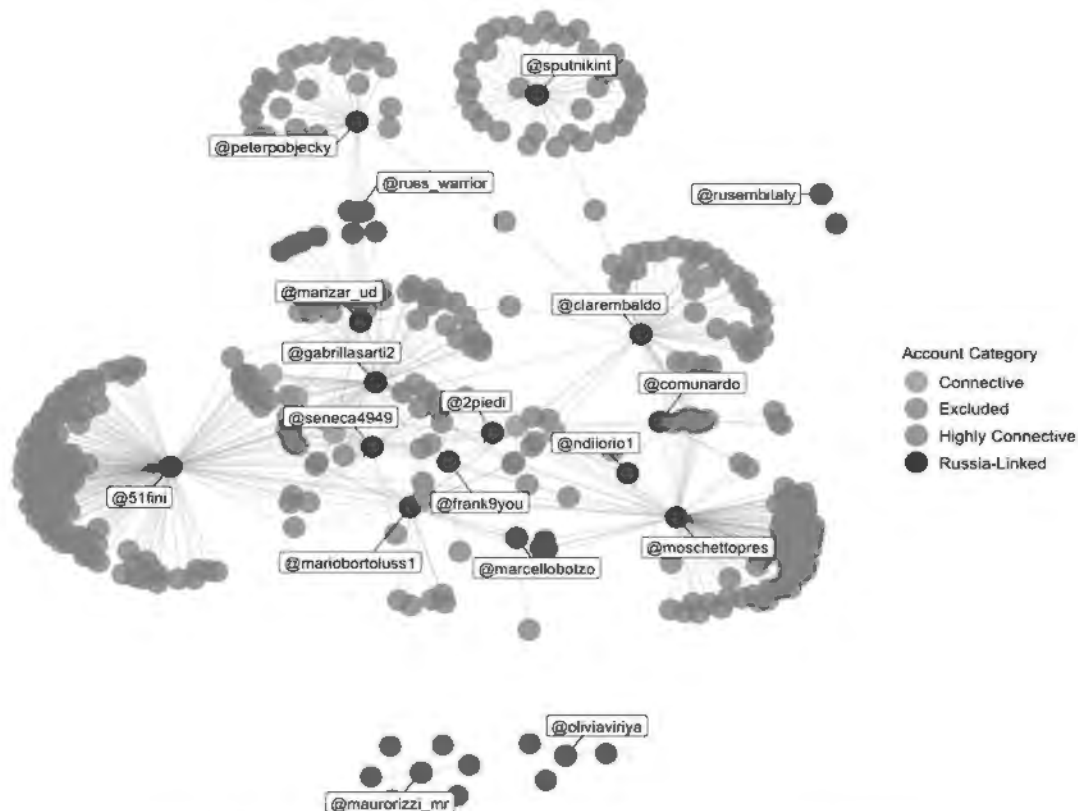


Network of Connective and Highly Connective Accounts with At Least 13 Interactions

The spread of disinformation relies on networks of agents, bots, and individuals that can bridge the divide between manufactured messaging and the broader public.² When we examined the structure of these paths, we found that certain accounts serve as connective bridges between Russia-linked accounts and a broader Twitter audience. Three accounts are *highly connective*, as measured by betweenness centrality, external to the suspected Russia-linked accounts. The next 13 are labeled *connective*, and all other accounts are labeled *excluded*.

When we looked at the structure of the social network of the identified Russia-linked accounts, we immediately saw different levels of connectedness between them. The accounts [@oliviaviriya](#), [@maurorizzi_mr](#), and [@rusembitaly](#) were largely disconnected from the central players in our dataset, as evident in the graphic above.³ The account [@51fini](#) was the most prolific in the dataset and also tagged many other accounts in its posts, which likely increased the visibility and reach of these posts.⁴

The users [@vicktop55](#), [@BotPutins](#), and [@Russ_Warrior](#) were all frequently retweeted by the Russia-linked accounts [@peterbojecky](#) and [@marizar_ud](#).⁵ The accounts sharing a position with [@russ_warrior](#) are both highly suspicious. [@BotPutins](#) is a self-identified semi-automated account that retweets pro-Russian and anti-U.S. propaganda, and lists its location as "Kremlin's basement." [@vicktop55](#) Tweets pro-Russian content in Russian, and anti-U.S. content in English. An examination of the co-retweeting patterns of these accounts suggests the possibility that they could be managed by the same agent or bot algorithm.⁶



Network of Identified Russia-linked Accounts with at Least 13 Interactions

Of approximately 30,000 tweets, 1,296 were co-retweets—identical retweets posted by two or more of these Russia-linked authors. This is a known method to increase the visibility of messages. Many of these co-retweets were posted within minutes or seconds of one another by separate accounts. For example, @Clarembaldo retweeted identical content within 3 minutes of @mariobortoluss1, @seneca4949, @peterbojecky, @marizar_ud, @moschettopres, and @Russ_Warrior.⁷ This is highly abnormal in an author network of this size that spans the course of a month, suggesting that these accounts might also be managed by the same agent or bot algorithm.

The most connective bridge accounts were all likely Russia-linked, and all of them published tweets at inhuman volumes. For example, @SabrySonoio was created in January and has published nearly 267 tweets a day since. This was also true for many of the "Connective" accounts.⁸ More detailed summaries of these three accounts can be found in the following section.

Highly Influential Bridge Accounts:

Acidelius (@Acidelius)⁹

- *Bio Line:* Liber scriptus proferetur in quo totum continetur, unde mundus judicetur. NB. Sharing is not always agreement #Asimmetrie #Goofynomics #Orizzonte48
- *Statistics:* 227k Tweets, 2.3k Following, 12.4k Followers, Joined April 2013
- *Description:* Acidelius is highly connective in the overall network. The account, displaying a Russian flag adjacent to its handle, frequently tweets news and memes featuring Putin. The account also disseminates COVID-19 disinformation. For example, on 30 March @Acidelius retweeted a photo of Zinc Supplements with the hashtag: #THIS_STUFF_WORKS.¹⁰



Nora Lira Vlnagre (@SabrySonoio)

- *Bio Line:* La Sovranità appartiene al Popolo rr
Ho amato. Ed ho commesso il solito vecchio errore
The Wall rr
- *Statistics:* 24.1K Tweets, 3.5k Following, 8.1k Followers, Joined JAN 2019
- *Description:* This account frequently posts anti-EU content. Its banner photo is a burning European Union flag and its content is all political. The user claims to be a nurse, but this is almost certainly false given the ongoing health crisis in Italy and the fact that the account publishes nearly 267 Tweets per day.



Valeria S. (@valy_s)¹¹

- **Bio Line:** Io sono una selva e una notte di alberi scuri, ma chi non ha paura delle mie tenebre troverà anche declivi di rose sotto i miei cipressi.
- **Statistics:** 344K Tweets, 7.1K Following, 32k Followers, Joined January 2012
- **Description:** This account is more subtle than the previous two, but also highly suspicious. At least 12 of the suspected Russian-linked accounts retweeted @valy_s in March, four of which retweeted the account at least 20 times (@Clarembaldo, @gabrillasarti2, @moschettopres, and @frank9you). While this account posts legitimate and accurate COVID-19 updates and news stories, it also posts content that attacks Italian politicians, the EU, and the United States. The account frequently shares divisive news stories and tweets without commentary and has posted an average of 114 tweets per day over the past 8 years.



Other Highly Connective Accounts in the Network

User	Tweets	Followers	Following	Acc. Created	Description	User Identified Location
@borghi_claudio ¹²	171,342	81,566	1,219	2011-07	Deputato della Repubblica Italiana eletto in Toscana per la Lega. Consigliere Comunale di Como	Italia
@luigimariano66 ¹³	26,309	2,276	2,043	2011-12	Il segreto della felicità è la libertà e il segreto della libertà è il coraggio (Pericle) -	- Lecce - Avvocato -
@Musso__ ¹⁴	160,715	6,103	2,672	2017-08	"analfabeta funzionale" e "di classe subalterna". ≠ Δ . RT is no endorsement. Il faut saisir les opportunités. Non c'è Turati senza prima Cavour.	
@BotPutins	3,6341	2,291	2,418	2019-07	The Voice of One Crying in The Wilderness. Semi-Automated.	Kremlin's basement
@vicktop55	104,026	9,206	4,682	2010-11		
@GiuseppeContel ¹⁵	961	494,013	95	2018-05	Presidente del Consiglio dei ministri della Repubblica Italiana IT	
@DottAngeloC ¹⁶	25,298	449	483	2018-04	رحمتي تيمود علی غضنبي	
@francescatotolo ¹⁷	48,682	24,802	707	2015-01	Collaboratrice de #IlPrimatoNazionale. Fieramente italiana e patriota, allergica al neo femminismo. #InfernoSpa https://t.co/G6I5rFDCoh	
@RadioSavana ¹⁸	87,748	16,456	2,007	2019-02	#AspettandoPrometeo	Genova, Liguria
@Tizzy44196287 ¹⁹	106,149	7,859	7,294	2018-07	Si vive una volta sola.....ma se lo fai bene, una volta è abbastanza!!!! DI DESTRA FINO ALLA MORTE!! Membro del #PAFI	Roma, Lazio
@nzingaretti ²⁰	16,373	505,498	1,806	2011-11	Segretario nazionale del @Pdnetwork e presidente della @regionelazio	

References:

- ¹ <https://twitter.com/vickytop55>, <https://twitter.com/botputins>, https://twitter.com/russ_warrior, <https://twitter.com/peterbojecky>, and https://twitter.com/marizar_ud
- ² Franziska B. Keller, David Schoch, Sebastian Stier & Junghwan Yang (2020) Political Astroturfing on Twitter: How to Coordinate a Disinformation Campaign, *Political Communication*, 37:2, 256-280, DOI: [10.1080/10584609.2019.1661888](https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1661888)
- ³ <https://twitter.com/oliviaviriya>, https://twitter.com/maurorizzi_mr, and <https://twitter.com/rusembitaly>
- ⁴ <https://twitter.com/51fini>
- ⁵ <https://twitter.com/vickytop55>, <https://twitter.com/botputins>, https://twitter.com/russ_warrior, <https://twitter.com/peterbojecky>, and https://twitter.com/marizar_ud
- ⁶ <https://twitter.com/vickytop55>, <https://twitter.com/botputins>, https://twitter.com/russ_warrior, <https://twitter.com/peterbojecky>, and https://twitter.com/marizar_ud
- ⁷ <https://twitter.com/Clarembaldo>, <https://twitter.com/mariobortoluss1>, <https://twitter.com/seneca4949>, and <https://twitter.com/moschettopres>
- ⁸ <https://twitter.com/SabrySonoio>
- ⁹ <https://twitter.com/Acidelius>
- ¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/GREGORYALANE1/status/1244947113122897921>
- ¹¹ https://twitter.com/valy_s
- ¹² https://twitter.com/borghi_claudio
- ¹³ <https://twitter.com/luigimariano66>
- ¹⁴ https://twitter.com/Musso__
- ¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/GiuseppeConteIT>
- ¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/DottAngeloC>
- ¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/francescatotolo>
- ¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/RadioSavana>
- ¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/Tizzy44196287>
- ²⁰ <https://twitter.com/nzingaretti>

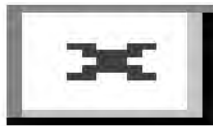
From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Global Digital Rights Digest | 01.15.21
Date: Tue, 19 Jan 2021 23:51:19 +0000

(b)(6)

I've met 1-2 people there on some calls where a tech question may have overlapped (maybe on censorship circumvention tools).

Also, while I have you -- saw this headline, seemed interesting, but have not confirmed the contents:

<https://fortune.com/2021/01/19/hospital-uk-blockchain-vaccines/>



A British hospital network is using blockchain technology to track Covid-19 vaccines

The NHS group in central England is recording temperature information about vaccine doses on Hedera's Hashgraph network.

fortune.com

All best,

(b)(6)

Senior Advisor, Technology Engagement Team
Global Engagement Center | U.S. Department of State
(b)(6)@state.gov

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 4:19 PM

To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Global Digital Rights Digest | 01.15.21

Nice. Do you work much with DRL?

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 4:05 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Fw: Global Digital Rights Digest | 01.15.21

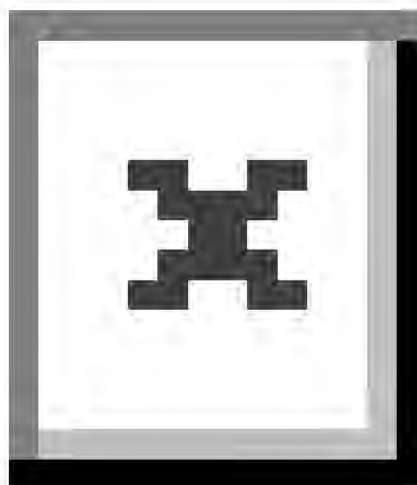
I find this always a nice summary -- FYSA

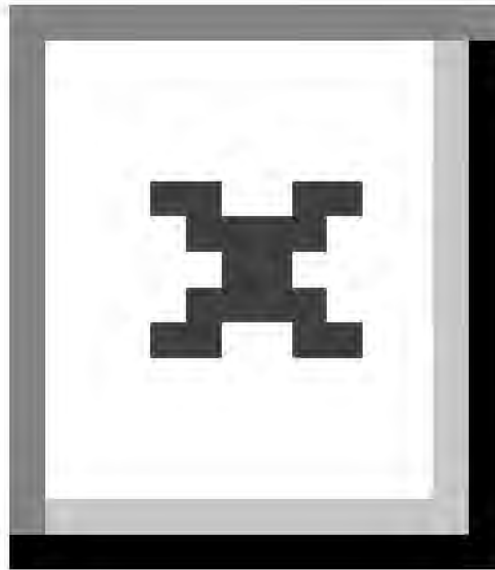
(b)(6)
Senior Advisor, Technology Engagement Team
Global Engagement Center | U.S. Department of State
(b)(6)@state.gov

From: Global Digital Policy Incubator <stanford_gdpi@stanford.edu>
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 9:56 AM
To: (b)(6)@stanford.edu>
Subject: Global Digital Rights Digest | 01.15.21

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KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Special Section- January 6 Capitol Hill Riots:

1. Social media platforms' responses to the violence on January 6 included dramatic new actions, including suspension of U.S. president Donald J. Trump
2. Parler, a platform that does not restrict violent extremist content, was removed from both Google and Apple App stores following the Capitol riots, and eventually removed from Amazon's web-hosting services, effectively taking it offline
3. Online activity promoting violence and extremism increased significantly in the lead up to the January 6 Capital riot in Washington D.C.
4. Companies that facilitate financial transactions or provide infrastructure for applications and web services, respond with actions to neutralize those promoting violence following the Capitol riots
5. Independent open source investigators and law enforcement use facial recognition to identify Capitol rioters, raising concerns among rights groups

Government Regulation of Online Platforms:

1. The EU aims to tackle Big Tech with new Digital Markets Act and Digital Services Act draft proposals
2. Uganda blocks all social media in advance of presidential elections, apparently in response to removal of pro-government accounts for inauthentic activity
3. YouTube, TikTok, DailyMotion, and VK each appoint legal representatives in Turkey, following implementation of new social media law

AI and Human Rights:

1. New Jersey man sues local authorities for arrest and imprisonment based on facial recognition "racial profiling" mismatch

Digital Security and Surveillance:

1. Singapore acknowledges that COVID contact-tracing data can be accessed by police for criminal investigations

Special Section- January 6 Capitol Hill Riots:

1. Social media platforms' responses to the violence on January 6 included dramatic new actions, including suspension of U.S. president Donald J. Trump

- **In the wake of the riots on Capitol Hill, technology companies took numerous steps to mitigate the risks of further violence by moderating content on their platforms.**
- **A number of platforms took their most severe actions to date against President Trump himself, as he continued to refuse to forcefully denounce the violence at the Capitol and to promote false claims of election fraud.**
 - **On January 6th, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter all removed President Trump's video reasserting electoral fraud and telling violent rioters that they were "very special" and that he loved them.** These platforms also removed content that violated their civil integrity policies.
 - **Following the escalating situation at the Capitol, as well as President Trump's obstinate refusal to forcefully condemn the riots, both Facebook and Twitter temporarily suspended the President's accounts for repeated violations of the companies' policies, suspensions which were later made permanent or indefinite.**
 - Facebook extended the suspension "indefinitely and for at least the next two weeks" until a peaceful transition of power can take place.
 - After warning that the temporary ban would become permanent if President Trump continued to violate the platform's policies, the President's Twitter account was briefly reinstated before being permanently suspended following tweets that violated the platform's glorification of violence policy.
 - Several attempts were made to circumvent the President's suspension on Twitter. A staffer renamed his account "Donald Trump" and gave the President access. Attempts were also made to use the official POTUS account. The staffer's account was ultimately suspended and the POTUS account was locked until a transition occurs.
 - YouTube has suspended President Trump's channel for at least one week. Before this decisive action, it had implemented a new policy for videos containing false claims, including those posted by the President.
 - **While Twitter and Facebook led the platforms' charge to take action against the President, a number of other platforms have followed suit.** Most notably, Snapchat and Twitch have both disabled the President's account without identifying an end date.
- **In addition to actions taken against the Presidents' accounts, platforms are removing content and accounts that incite violence and perpetuate real-world harms.**

- Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have taken increased action against accounts using the hashtag #stopthesteal or promoting the unfounded conspiracy theory that there was widespread electoral fraud. This has included automatically removing posts with the hashtag or phrase. Twitter has also suspended several accounts associated with the conspiracy theory.
- Other less high-profile platforms, like Mailchimp and DLive, have removed accounts that attempted to incite violence through their platforms and those that were directly linked to the Capitol riots. Even companies we don't typically think of as content platforms, like Peloton, have begun banning certain hashtags linked to the riots.
- **These drastic and swift actions against President Trump's accounts mark a shift from platforms' previous reticence to moderate the speech of public officials, especially those who post divisive content.** Questions remain, however, about how this will impact platform policies moving forward, both domestically and internationally.

2. Parler, a platform that does not restrict violent extremist content, was removed from both Google and Apple App stores following the Capitol riots, and eventually removed from Amazon's web-hosting services, effectively taking it offline

- **On January 11, social media platform Parler went offline when Amazon withdrew web-hosting services to the company.** The platform had generated a widespread conservative and pro-Trump user base following Twitter and Facebook's increasing moderation of false claims by President Trump and his supporters. Once Twitter and Facebook made the decision to de-platform President Trump, Parler jumped to the most downloaded free app in the App Store.
- **Amazon cited Parler's violation of its terms of service by failing to adequately moderate "inappropriate" content on its platform, specifically the glorification of violence experienced at the Capitol riots.** Parler has been accused of being one of the primary online locations for organizing the riots, including posts urging users to bring guns to the Capitol, even inciting violence against Vice President Mike Pence.
 - Amazon cited 98 specific examples in its initial warning before cancelling the platform's web-hosting services.
- **Amazon's move was the latest in a series of blows dealt to the platform since the riot at the Capitol.** Apple and Google cut off Parler by removing its app from their app stores, citing the platform's inability or unwillingness to remove illegal content inciting violence or threats to public safety.
- **Hours after going dark, Parler filed a federal lawsuit arguing that Amazon had violated antitrust law by conspiring with Twitter to shut down its platform.** Parler also complained that they were

not given a 30 days' notice and were prematurely terminated. An Amazon spokesperson stated that these claims had "no merit," reaffirming that Parler's content moderation behaviors in recent weeks demonstrated they were either "unable or unwilling to promptly identify and remove" violating content.

3. Online activity promoting violence and extremism increased significantly in the lead up to the January 6 Capital riot in Washington D.C

- **Multiple media outlets and organizations documented a significant increase in online content by extremist groups expressing violent rhetoric and previewing planned riot activity in the weeks before the riot.** The Anti-Defamation League, which has been tracking extremist social media content over the past year, flagged the recent increase in violent online rhetoric to law enforcement in advance of the attack.
- Online content has been driven by weeks of unfounded claims of election fraud from President Trump and his supporters; however, **the more recent uptick was closely linked to Trump's specific promotion of a January 6 protest in Washington, DC to "stop the steal" of the election result.**
- **The increase in violent rhetoric online was seen on both mainstream social media platforms and websites popular with far-right and extremist groups.** For instance, NBC News has highlighted multiple QAnon-affiliated accounts on Twitter calling for protest attendees to arm themselves. Videos on TikTok with thousands of views similarly promoted violent activity at the protest. Advance Democracy, an investigative organization, also found that half of the top posts made on the website TheDonald.win on January 4 discussing the electoral certification process included calls for violence on January 6th. The niche website was established after Reddit removed and banned the subreddit of the same name.
- Platforms generally responded by taking down content that violates policies on the promotion of violence that can lead to real-world harm, but the online activity does not seem to have prompted greater action on the ground. This raises questions about how online threats should translate to offline security.

4. Companies that facilitate financial transactions or provide infrastructure for applications and web services, respond with actions to neutralize those promoting violence following the Capitol riots

- Following the violence at the Capitol, companies typically outside the conversation around protecting digital rights and limiting harmful speech online have taken significant steps to limit their connection

to those who stormed the Capitol, or who would otherwise promote violence. Companies that forced Parler offline are most notable in their responses. As outlined in more detail above, Apple and Google removed the app from their store. Amazon Web Services withdrew its services from Parler. In practice, the app was temporarily forced to completely stop operations.

- Other companies, however, have also taken important steps.
 - Paypal and Venmo closed the account of the organizer of the "Stop the Steal" rally where Trump incited participants, Ali Alexander. Patreon has also suspended Alexander's account.
 - Paypal also closed an account used to raise travel funds for participants, and Gofundme removed campaigns used to fund travel for the January 6th event.
 - Gofundme removed campaigns used to fund travel and other expenses, and banned fundraising for events likely to "incite violence."
 - Shopify stopped hosting two stores selling Trump merchandise, and Stripe announced that it will no longer process payments for Trump's campaign website.
- These actions demonstrate the power of digital companies beyond social media platforms, particularly those that provide the infrastructure for activity online, to impact the viral spread of demonstrably harmful content when they choose to take action. While it is not the first time that financial services companies or web hosting platforms have taken action, it is the most high-profile.

5. Independent open source investigators and law enforcement use facial recognition to identify Capitol rioters, raising concerns among rights groups

- Following the riots at the Capitol, both independent open source investigators and law enforcement have begun to identify those who were present. Because the rioters largely did not wear masks and posted numerous pictures and videos, facial recognition has been employed by both independent researchers and reportedly by law enforcement to identify them.
- Rights organizations have raised serious concerns that the need to identify those who invaded the Capitol building will serve to further normalize the use of facial recognition, with serious potential risks to individual privacy and for innocent people who might be mistakenly targeted. These groups argue that even at such a critical moment, the use of facial recognition has serious risks. These algorithms have known limitations, and some of the databases used by companies that offer these services use photos which were obtained without users' consent. Lauding facial recognition in this moment has the potential to further entrench its more regular and widespread use. On the other hand, law enforcement experts have applauded the surge in tips and leads as critical in arresting perpetrators of the violence and in disabling the extremist movement.

- The current situation points to the pressing need for clearer regulation of facial recognition. It also demonstrates the complex balance between the usefulness of the technology and its potential risks to privacy and false identification.

Government Regulation of Online Platforms:

1. The EU aims to tackle Big Tech with new Digital Markets Act and Digital Services Act draft proposals

- **On December 15, the European Commission published two highly-anticipated draft proposals: the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA).** These sweeping new rules reflect major changes in Europe's approach towards its digital strategy. The EU aims to preserve individual users' digital rights and create a more equitable playing field for tech competitors and consumers alike. As other nations such as the US engage in Big Tech antitrust and regulation deliberations, this European digital policy experiment is a critical alternative approach to watch.
- **The Digital Services Act (DSA) creates new binding obligations for digital service providers, effectively expanding the "liability regime" for intermediary services and online platforms and strengthening the enforcement of such duties.** For example, the law designates due diligence obligations for flagging illegal online content and activities, such as maintaining "traceability of business users in online marketplaces." It also includes provisions for the protection of online users' freedom of speech, such as avenues for redress regarding disputed content.
 - **Notably, when deciding the scope of obligations, the law considers an online service's "role, size and impact in the online ecosystem."** For example, "very large platforms" encompass platforms that "reach more than 10% of the EU's population," thus meriting heightened standards of transparency and accountability under the DSA, such as sharing critical data with authorities and researchers.
 - In terms of oversight, the law states that **EU countries will be the primary enforcers, bolstered by a new European Board for Digital Services**, "an independent advisory group of national authorities designated by the Member States for the consistent application of the DSA." However, **very large platforms will receive "enhanced supervision and enforcement by the Commission."**

- **On the other hand, the Digital Markets Act (DMA) aims to regulate platforms that act as “gatekeepers” in the digital realm, with the goal of building a more free and fair competitive landscape.** As such, the DMA establishes various obligations for gatekeepers, colloquially described as “do’s” and “don’ts”, such as permitting third-parties to interoperate with their services and allowing users to uninstall any pre-installed software or apps.
 - In order to fall under the scope of the DMA, a **platform must meet three cumulative criteria**, each of which has its own quantitative definitions outlined in the law: (1) A size that impacts the internal market; (2) the control of an important gateway for business users towards final consumers; and (3) an (expected) entrenched and durable position. The Commission also reserves the right to conduct market investigations on whether to deem a particular company as a gatekeeper.
 - **Enforcement will be at the discretion of the Commission, due to the “cross-border nature of gatekeepers.”** Failure to comply with the DMA can result in sanctions and fines of up to **10% of the company's total worldwide annual turnover or periodic penalty payments of up to 5% of the company's total worldwide annual turnover.**
- **Ultimately, these twin acts largely were written to rein in Big Tech companies that have cultivated powerful monopolies.** So far, Big Tech has not expressed substantial resistance to the draft proposals, **though greater pushback is expected.**
 - Shortly after the proposals were released, the Computer and Communications Industry Association (CCIA), a group that represents tech giants including Amazon, Facebook, Twitter and Google, published a neutral but cautious statement welcoming cooperation to create effective policies that would **“make the EU a leader in digital innovation, not just in digital regulation.”**
 - However, the proposals did receive backlash from the **US Chamber of Commerce**, which raised concerns that the laws targeted almost exclusively American companies with its “onerous” regulations and hefty financial penalties.
- **Though the DSA/DMA package presents promising wins for consumers and small digital actors, civil society organizations such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) have identified a few points of concern in the draft proposals.** For example, EFF highlighted that under the content moderation obligations outlined in the laws, “platforms, rather than courts, are increasingly becoming the arbiters” of acceptable online speech. Other pain points include the ban on competing national laws made by EU member states and the absence of rules on interoperability.

2. Uganda blocks all social media in advance of presidential elections, apparently in response to removal of pro-government accounts for inauthentic activity

- On January 12th, the Ugandan Communications Commission ordered ISPs throughout the country to “immediately suspend any access and use, direct or otherwise, of all social media platforms and online messaging applications.” The order was issued only two days before a presidential and parliamentary election whose campaigns have so far been characterized by violence and intimidation of opposition candidates.
- The move also comes after Facebook shut down a network of accounts linked to the Ugandan Ministry of Information for inauthentic activity such as using fake accounts in order to spread pro-government messages. The latest order is rumored to be in part a retaliation for this removal, although social media was also blocked during the 2016 elections in the country.
- This is only the latest in the Ugandan government’s increasing attempts to repress dissent in part by limiting speech online, although there have also been widespread reports of violence against journalists. In December, the government also pressured Youtube to remove channels opposing the government from the platform. As repression of dissent escalates offline, social media has been an important space for opposition politics in Uganda.
- Human rights organizations have called for Uganda to halt the shutdown of social media and allow a free flow of information in advance of the elections.

3. YouTube, TikTok, DailyMotion, and VK each appoint legal representatives in Turkey, following implementation of new social media law

- On December 16, YouTube was among the first social media companies to appoint a local representative to Turkey in compliance with the country’s new social media law. TikTok, Dailymotion, and VK have also acquiesced to the stipulation.
- Turkey’s social media law came into effect on October 1, 2020. It requires companies with more than 1 million daily users to appoint a representative on the ground in Turkey within 30 days of the law going into effect. The law stipulates that if social media companies do not cooperate with Turkish authorities, they will face fines and bandwidth reductions of up to 90%, rendering them virtually inoperable. The Turkish government fined Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube each TL 30 million (~\$3.83 million) in early December.
- Compliance with the law has the potential to threaten free expression, and tightens the government’s control over social media. The new legal pressure on social media companies creates opportunities for arbitrary censorship. Furthermore, in-country representatives will be under substantial pressure to comply with government orders, and risk personal consequences and arbitrary detention for failure to comply.

AI and Human Rights:

1. New Jersey man sues local authorities for arrest and imprisonment based on facial recognition "racial profiling" mismatch

- **A New Jersey man, Nijeer Park,** filed a civil lawsuit against local law enforcement, prosecutors and city government for violating his right to equal protection through their use of facial recognition. Other cited violations include false imprisonment, cruel and unusual punishment, and excessive force under the Fourth Amendment.
 - The Black plaintiff alleges that police misidentified him as a suspect in a 2019 criminal investigation. Unspecified facial recognition software that authorities used had returned a "high profile match" between a fake driver's license and his photo in the government database. The New York and New Jersey police departments involved in the case and two other investigators denied or did not confirm participation.
 - The plaintiff further alleges that authorities' sole reliance on the algorithmic mismatch as evidence, without consideration of his alibi or other biometrics, constituted "racial profiling" as well as false arrest and imprisonment. Prosecutors dismissed his case after the presiding New Jersey Superior Court judge required authorities to produce evidence beyond the facial recognition match in the court hearings.
 - Park's case is the third known instance of a Black man arrested based on facial recognition mismatch in America, and the second lawsuit claiming wrongful AI-driven arrest and prosecution. The case affirms ongoing concerns voiced by human rights experts about the discriminatory outcomes and community mistrust of the use of algorithms in law enforcement, such as for surveillance and predictive policing.
-

Digital Security and Surveillance:

1. Singapore acknowledges that COVID contact-tracing data can be accessed by police for criminal investigations

- On January 4, Singaporean government ministers revealed that data from its COVID-19 contact-tracing program can be used by the police for criminal investigations, marking a sharp reversal of its previous privacy assurances. Nearly 80% of residents use the popular TraceTogether app or wearable Bluetooth token, which record location check-ins and whom individuals are in contact with, making it one of the most successful national contact-tracing programs in the world.
- In the initial phase of the program, Singaporean authorities attempted to rally mass participation by promising that “the data w[ould] never be accessed, unless the user tests positive for Covid-19 and is contacted by the contact tracing team.” Now, government leaders including Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan have walked back their statements, citing the Criminal Procedure Code as the legal obligation for surrendering users' data to the police if necessary.
 - Despite reassurances from officials that TraceTogether had been designed with careful consideration towards privacy, the centralized storage of users' data inherently prompted concerns regarding individuals' **rights to privacy, freedom of movement, and freedom of association**.
- This revelation has evinced major backlash from Singaporean citizens and eroded public trust in government, particularly as it pertains to privacy. In turn, without public support, the Singaporean government may face critical challenges to the success of future initiatives and health responses that require individual compliance with data collection.

The Global Digital Rights Digest was inaugurated with the generous support of the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). The contents are the responsibility of GDPi and do not necessarily reflect the views of ICNL or Stanford University.

.x]

The Global Digital Policy Incubator *is a part of Stanford's Cyber Policy Center at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies.*

Our mailing address is:
stanford gdpi@stanford.edu

Sender: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Recipient: (b)(6)@state.gov>

From: (b)(6)@geciq.com>
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
CC: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: RE: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020
Date: Wed, 9 Dec 2020 15:11:25 +0000

Sure, sounds good!

Best,

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 9:39 AM
To: (b)(6)@geciq.com>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

Hello (b)(6)

I will be on leave on Tuesday, but could you send the appointment anyways? I might be able to log in for a little bit... Everything is on COVID lockdown anyways. Thank you for checking in!

Cheers,

(b)(6)

Please note I am currently working remotely from Turkey through the first full week in January. Core work hours are 6a-2p EST, though I am available for meetings anytime and can always be reached on the U.S. mobile number below.

--

(b)(6)

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Specialist

Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs | Office of Press and Public Diplomacy

Alutiiq Information Management, LLC

Email: (b)(6)@state.gov | Mobile: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)@geciq.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 9:09 AM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: RE: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

Hi (b)(6)

I wanted to check in and see if you still wanted to join the GEC-IQ demo we are holding for Colombo. It will be next week on Tuesday at 8 AM.

Best,

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 1:17 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@geciq.onmicrosoft.com>
Subject: Re: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

Hi (b)(6)

Yes, looping in our GEC-IQ USG platform lead, (b)(6).

Is the interest in a particular part or functionality of GEC-IQ? Would you like a demo/refreshers for the team?

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 11:57 AM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

No problem, (b)(6)

+the CMI crew.

Can we arrange a time to chat? As we continue to build our country profiles, we are starting to see an interest in access to the IQ. We wanted to brainstorm to see what that might look like.

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 11:56
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

Fantastic!! Thank you!

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 9:16 AM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

Hi (b)(6)

Yes, I can access now! Thank you.

Best,

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 14:54
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

Hi (b)(6)

I checked with the Tech Team and you should see the button now (as of Friday eve). If you don't mind checking again, can you confirm when you get a chance?

Thank you!

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 10:07 AM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

Hi (b)(6)

I couldn't access it through either link because I'm not assigned tableau in Okta. Any clue how I get assigned Tableau?

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 09:58
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Fw: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

Hi (b)(6)

Do you (or a designated person) mind testing if access to Tableau Enterprise works for you on your OpenNet or through Okta? The instructions are the last bullet below. No need for GEC-IQ to view the dashboard! Will also be posting the DDI here.

Much appreciated!

(b)(6)

From: (b)(6)@state.gov> on behalf of Bray, Leah (b)(6)@state.gov>

Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 9:44 AM

To: (b)(6)@state.gov>

(b)(6); (b)(3)

State, military and other agency addressees

(b)(6); (b)(3)

(b)(6)



Subject: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020



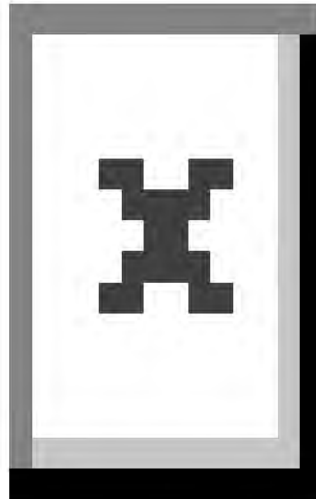
11/13/2020

Colleagues,

(U) Ongoing GEC Activities to Expose Propaganda and Disinformation.

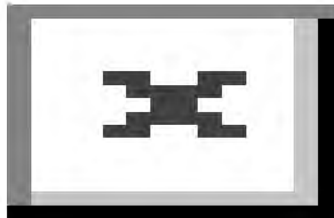
(U) Countering Russian Disinformation.

- **(U) *Russian Pillars Report* Featured in Leading UK Newspaper.** The UK-based newspaper *The Times* ran a frontpage article on the British government's cyberwar against anti-vaccine Russian propaganda, citing the GEC's *Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem* report and highlighting three proxy sites mentioned in the *Pillars* report: SouthFront, News Front, and Geopolitica.ru.
 - **(U) The author of the article, Lucy Fisher, promoted the article and the *Pillars Report* in tweets, which included in a link to the report.**



(U) Countering Iranian Disinformation.

- ~~(SBU)~~ **A GEC Partner Exposes Tehran's Laissez-faire Approach to COVID-19.** The two-minute video, produced by a GEC partner and viewable on YouTube, reveals the scale of the epidemic within Iran's borders and highlights the Iranian regime's focus on detaining those accused of spreading "rumors" about the disease rather than working on pandemic mitigation efforts. **The video also showed how militia fighters deployed to Syria, many of whom disregarded health precautions, were spreading the illness. 1,600 of 6,200 YouTube views in the first two days came from people who searched for "Hizballah" in Arabic; 73 percent of those who did that search watched the video.** The video was also published on three other platforms. View COVID-19 video in English [here](#).



(U) Image from the video depicting COVID-19 infected Shia Pilgrims and militia fighters traveling to Qom, Iran.

(U) Undermining and Exposing Terrorists.

- ~~(SBU)~~ **Pro-ISIS Rocket.Chat Channel Urges Renewed Allegiance for ISIS Emir.** The Counter Extremism Project (CEP), an international non-partisan think tank, identified the post (made initially on October 23), which called on ISIS supporters to renew their pledge of allegiance to Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi. The *Rocket.Chat* channel stated that video and audio pledges to ISIS would be published on Telegram and other platforms to showcase the group's strength.
 - ~~(SBU)~~ **Since the September 17 launch of the GEC lead al-Mawla CONOP, ISIS has increased its requests for online pledges. It is the GEC's assessment that this is an attempt to rebuild lost credibility resulting from the CONOP's release of damaging interrogation reports.**

(U) Countering CCP Disinformation.

- **(U) The GEC Facilitates Coordination between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States on Building Journalism Capacity in the Pacific Islands.** As part of the GEC's efforts to work with America's allies and partners to confront disinformation and propaganda, the GEC facilitated the first meeting between the State Department, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to share information on journalism capacity-building programs across the Pacific Islands.
 - (U) The representatives agreed to develop a framework for de-conflicting activities moving forward. To facilitate that effort, the GEC has generated a catalog of ongoing media support activities conducted by the three countries. This deconfliction effort seeks to maximize the impact and reach of programming by the U.S. and its allies to bolster Pacific Islands media against foreign influence and to avoid over-burdening small media outlets.
 - (U) The group agreed to meet on a quarterly basis moving forward to advance coordination and collaboration to counter disinformation in the Pacific Islands. This effort is an off-shoot of the U.S.-Australia Disinformation Working Group first announced this Summer at the Australia-United States Ministerial Consultation.

(U) Additional Significant GEC Activities.

- **(U) On November 6, the GEC and DHS's Online Counter Disinformation Game, Harmony Square, was Reviewed Positively in the Harvard Misinformation Review.**
 - **(U) Within four days of the announcement of research by the Harvard Misinformation Review, the game gained over 23,000 players.** The game has received extensive media coverage with over 60 articles resulting from Harvard's review and an earlier press release from Cambridge University.
 - (U) The peer reviewed research found that the game increased psychological resistance against manipulation techniques commonly used in political misinformation. Drawing on "inoculation theory," the game functions as a psychological "vaccine" by exposing people to weakened doses of the common techniques used in political misinformation especially during elections.
 - (U) GEC introduced DHS to the game concept during a GEC Tech Demo in 2019. As a result, GEC and DHS partnered with the game developer DROG to develop what eventually became Harmony Square.
 - (U) The GEC will conduct an international rollout of the game in coming weeks, while DHS is finalizing its preparations for a domestic rollout.
- **(U) The GEC Announces Election-related Assistance to Ecuador.** At the November 10 U.S.-Ecuador Bilateral Expanded Political Dialogue, Special Envoy Lea Gabrielle announced that the GEC would provide training to the Ecuadorians in preparation for their upcoming elections.
 - **(U) The GEC will conduct training on its collaborative analytics platform, GEC-IQ, as well as disinformation and propaganda-related training for Ecuadorian government communicators and analysts.** These training events are scheduled to take place before the end of the year.
 - (U) Ecuador has been the victim of previous coordinated disinformation campaigns, most recently surrounding its response to COVID-19. The GEC's assistance will help enable the conduct of free and fair elections while blunting the impact that disinformation and adversarial propaganda may have on the electoral outcome.
- **(U) The GEC's Principal Deputy Coordinator (PDC) Daniel Kimmage Spoke to Thousands of Tech Sector Participants at the November 9 Africa Tech Festival Panel.** His participation was in support of the GEC's upcoming U.S.-Africa Tech Challenge.
 - (U) PDC Kimmage spoke about the GEC and highlighted the U.S.-Africa Tech Challenge while providing the GEC's perspective on how technology has an impact on disinformation and counter-disinformation efforts. He emphasized that private industry should work with the GEC to develop tools to alert users on disinformation campaigns.
 - **(U) After the Tech Festival, panel member Emmanuel Lubanzadio, Twitter's Head of Public Policy for Sub-Saharan Africa expressed interest in participating in the GEC's upcoming Africa Tech Challenge.**

- **(U) On November 5, the GEC Briefed its Technology Programs at the DOD's Information Conflict Technical Exchange Meeting.** The meeting was hosted by the Joint Information Operations Warfare Center.
 - (U) The purpose of this government-only meeting was to bring together Military Services, Service Labs, Government Agencies, federally funded research and development centers, and University Affiliated Research Centers which are currently working on programs or research relevant to Information Operations.
 - (U) The GEC used the event to promote its technology programs, with the goal of eliciting additional DOD participation from the 100+ personnel at the meeting.
 - (U) Numerous DOD partners contacted the GEC after the event to request participation.
- **(U) The GEC's Disinfocloud.com (1163 users) Platform Informs the Interagency and Foreign Government Partners about Technology Capabilities and Assessments of Tools to Counter Propaganda and Disinformation (CPD).** Visit the following links for the latest Disinfo Cloud social media postings on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), the Disinfo Cloud [blog](#), and the Disinfo Cloud [Newsfeed](#). Posts by Disinfo Cloud this week include:
 - (U) As a follow-up to the March 2019 Weapons of Mass Destruction report; Disinfo Cloud is publishing a series of blog posts that highlight recent foreign state-sponsored disinformation and propaganda efforts; explore how governments and intergovernmental bodies are responding to the challenge; highlight what social media platforms are doing as well as activities by civil society and independent organizations; and spotlight tools and technologies that can be leveraged to address the threat.
 - (U) The fourth post on actions by social media platforms to combat disinformation will be published later this week.
 - (U) Disinfo Cloud's weekly disinfo news round-up summarizes publicly available content featured on the Disinfo Cloud newsfeed. This week Disinfo Cloud included the following news highlights:
 - (U) After playing the game Harmony Square, gamers/users had a positive change of behavior. They found misinformation significantly less reliable, are significantly more confident in their assessment of misinformation, and are significantly less likely to share misinformation. Harmony Square is a free online game aimed at inoculating people against online manipulation.
 - (U) The number of Russians who trust television as a source of information has dropped to 23 percent. Russians have become more aware that Russian-state affiliated media has a role in spreading disinformation. PRC influence operations on Twitter have limited impact largely due to poor messaging and network coordination, although new technologies and platforms such as YouTube might offer greater results.

(U) Current Observations and Analysis.

- ~~(SBU)~~ **The GEC Monitors for Foreign Disinformation During the U.S. 2020 Election.** The GEC conducted select monitoring of the overseas information environment for Russian, Iranian, and PRC disinformation. Russian state and proxy media outlets engaged in clear amplification of inflammatory, anti-U.S. themes.
 - ~~(SBU)~~ For example, throughout U.S. elections week, RT and Sputnik continuously promoted through videos and online articles claims of election fraud, protests, and the potential for post-election violence or a “coup” in the United States.
 - ~~(SBU)~~ As the election results started to shift toward former Vice President Joe Biden, RT, Sputnik, and Iranian media began publishing more articles claiming that “the U.S. is broken either way.” Russians used third-party influencers and proxy websites such as SouthFront and Global Research to cover election fraud and anti-U.S. “coup” narratives.
- **(U) ISIS Supporters React to U.S. Elections.** Several pro-ISIS channels on Telegram commented on the results of the U.S. elections. A post by *2020 Course of Event* said that regardless of who wins the election, jihadis should be ready “to fight Biden’s army or Trump’s army.” Another post on the same channel asked followers to provide speeches of jihadi leaders who discussed the significance of jihad against America, including clips that document operations in the U.S., specifically killing. Another ISIS supporter posted on Telegram he hoped Trump’s rejection of Biden’s victory would lead to a U.S. civil war while another pro-ISIS Telegram channel predicted Biden will win the U.S. elections.
 - (U) Pro-ISIS supporters continue to respond to direction given in a recent speech by ISIS spokesman, Abu Hamzah Al-Qurashi, calling supporters worldwide to carry out attacks and to also add their own messages encouraging others to do the same. In the same speech, al-Qurashi told fighters in various ISIS provinces to increase their efforts and attacks, and when referring to Iraq, he predicted U.S. forces will soon leave the country, enabling ISIS to advance against the Iraqi army.
- **(U) The GEC Finds That Global Twitter Conversations and Global Media Outside of China Largely Favored Pro-Democracy Protestors in Hong Kong.** On November 5, the GEC published two reports that found that both global Twitter conversations and global media outside of China largely favored the pro-democracy protestors and criticized Beijing’s erosion of Hong Kong’s autonomy in the months following Beijing’s enactment of China’s National Security Law for Hong Kong on June 30.
 - (U) The reports also evaluated receptivity to CCP propaganda on Hong Kong within Hong Kong. Analysis showed that Twitter users self-locating in Hong Kong amplified the announcement of U.S. sanctions against Chief Executive Carrie Lam and other Hong Kong and PRC officials. Hong Kong users also expressed concern that the National Security Law would erode fundamental rights and liberties. Articles in Hong Kong that endorsed sanctions on Chief Executive Lam for using excessive police force were shared at higher volumes than articles from CCP-linked outlets like *East Week*, which claimed the United

States had meddled in Beijing's affairs by supporting protesters in Hong Kong and monitoring Hong Kong's online network systems.

- (U) **The GEC Makes its Vaccine Coverage Estimation Model Available to the Department of State.** All DOS employees can now view the Vaccine Coverage Estimation Model (V-CEM) dashboard without logging into GEC-IQ. A future iteration of the dashboard will be available for non-DOS government users on a needed basis.
 - (U) The V-CEM dashboard, which was built by the GEC, is a near real time, global monitoring capability for estimating the tone and volume of media coverage regarding top vaccine development efforts and long-term trends of structural relations with the U.S., China, and Russia. V-CEM gathers global news coverage in over 50+ languages from approximately 172 countries. These stories are then analyzed based on their volume and tone on the leading global vaccine development efforts.
 - (U) DOS employees can access the dashboard if already logged into OpenNet by going to the website <https://tableauenterprise.geciq.com/> or by logging in through Okta (the State Department's secure platform for accessing cloud applications) with their OpenNet credentials or PIV/CAC card reader. Once on the Okta homepage, click on the **GEC-IQ Tableau** button to launch Tableau Enterprise, search for "vaccine" and view the dashboard.

(U) In closing, thank you for your close collaboration with the GEC team. Our success is made possible only by the great colleagues we have in State, the interagency, and our international partnerships. We will continue to release these reports on a bi-weekly basis. Please contact the GEC's Acting PPO Director (b)(6) at (b)(6) @state.gov if we can be of any assistance.

Best regards,
Leah Bray
Deputy Coordinator for Policy, Plans, and Operations

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

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~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

Sender: (b)(6)@geciq.com>

Recipient: (b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: (h)(6)@america.gov (b)(6)@america.gov>
Subject: RE: FROM (h)(6) G7RRM Meeting Tomorrow
Date: Wed, 14 Oct 2020 12:39:38 +0000

Sent from Workspace ONE Boxer

On October 13, 2020 at 4:35:00 PM EDT, (b)(6)@state.gov> wrote:
Sure – please see below.

I'd highlight analytic effort that will have broader appeal for the G7 community.

1. One of our current analytical focuses is the upcoming election in Bolivia (Election is Oct 18). The GEC is helping the U.S. Embassy in La Paz get a better sense of the information environment prior to election day, and potentially use our analysis for shaping strategic communication efforts. A couple of days ago, we put out the first report, and today (Wed Oct 14) we will product another one which will be available on GEC-IQ.

Today's report is the second of a series of three reports analyzing the presence and role of disinformation in Bolivia related to the upcoming election. The first report focused on notable false narratives on twitter as well as nascent indications of coordinated activity potentially driven by regional actors. The second report focuses the Bolivian Movement Toward Socialism part, its leader Evo Morales, and his supporters, tracking overt efforts to amplify allegations of likely election fraud in the lead up to the elections, and how this positions MAS well regardless of the outcome.

Executive Summary (From first report): Analysis of Twitter content related to the 18 October 2020 elections in Bolivia indicates that foreign actors have likely taken an increased interest in the outcome. While detractors of former Bolivian president Evo Morales have amplified allegations of reprehensible personal conduct, Morales' supporters have returned to amplifying narratives of foreign intervention, suggesting that he was deposed as a result of a coup. Representatives of the Maduro regime, the Cuban government, and the Argentine government have decried efforts to prevent Morales from seeking the senate, while at least one official of the Áñez government has suggested that Argentina seeks to unduly influence the election. While much of the content we assessed bore no clear indicators of disinformation, a number of online behaviors likely indicate coordinated amplification of propaganda narratives designed to influence and shape public opinion in advance of the election.

Following up with the IQ TP soon.

From: Bray, Leah <(b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 3:57 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: FW: FROM (b)(6) - G7RRM Meeting Tomorrow

Can you provide some examples of recent analytic products as (b)(6) suggests below? Just a couple of sentences on where the focus of our analytic effort has been in recent weeks.

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 3:06 PM
To: Bray, Leah <(b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: RE: G7RRM Meeting Tomorrow

Hi Leah;

Not really.

Nothing appears to be happening on the G7 leaders front, which I assume will be on their minds.

I checked with P, and I gather it is radio silence at the White House, given the preoccupation with the election.

I've seen some of the good studies you've been circulating, and you may want to highlight those.

If any of them are not yet linked up to GEC-IQ, you may want to urge that.

(b)(6)

From: Bray, Leah <(b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 2:53 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: G7RRM Meeting Tomorrow

Hi (b)(6) —

I'm a little behind the power curve and am just now turning to thinking about points for tomorrow's meeting. Anything in particular you intend to raise?

Thanks, Leah

Leah Bray
Deputy Coordinator
Global Engagement Center
U.S. Department of State
(b)(6)

<20OCT - Propaganda Narratives Abound as Foreign Actors Increase Focus on the Looming Bolivian Election - GEC.pdf>

Sender: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Recipient: (b)(6)@america.gov (b)(6)@america.gov>

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Debunk EU: Disinformation tsunami against the Baltic states during Belarus protests
Date: Thu, 1 Oct 2020 15:51:55 +0000

thank you. Will include in Highlights.

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 1, 2020 10:41 AM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>; GEC-R-EXP <GEC-R-EXP@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Fw: Debunk EU: Disinformation tsunami against the Baltic states during Belarus protests

See below and attached for great report from Debunk EU on disinfo in Baltic states in August 2020.

Best,

(b)(6)

From: Viktoras Daukšas | Debunk EU (b)(6)@debunkeu.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 1, 2020 3:36 AM
Subject: Debunk EU: Disinformation tsunami against the Baltic states during Belarus protests

Hi,

Here is the new report from Debunk EU: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia disinformation analysis for August 2020.

During the month of August, we have managed to analyse 6500 content pieces throughout all three countries.

The events in Belarus, where people are protesting after the implicit falsification of the results of presidential election, were topical in the media agenda-setting in August. Therefore, it is not surprising that the pro-Kremlin propaganda actively used this topic too. In its own narratives about Belarus, it reserved special places for the Baltic states (especially for Lithuania). The Baltic states, together with other regional countries, were presented as the provokers of the protests.

Read full article:

<https://medium.com/@DebunkEU/debunk-eu-election-fraud-in-belarus-brought-a-surge-of-pro-kremlin-propaganda-e41a350ed7f9>

The report is attached as PDF.

About Debunk EU

Debunk EU, VSI, is an independent technology think tank and non-governmental organisation that researches disinformation and runs educational media literacy campaigns. Debunk EU conducts disinformation analysis in the Baltic states, as well as in the United States and Northern Macedonia together with the partners. Debunk EU was noticed by such media giants as "The Financial Times" and "Deutsche Welle". The organisation has presented its activities in 17 countries, including the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Serbia, etc.

Published reports:

<https://medium.com/@DebunkEU>

Social media:

<https://www.facebook.com/DebunkEU>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/debunk-eu/>

<https://twitter.com/DebunkEu>

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Viktoras Daukšas

Head of Debunk EU

Mob. tel. +[(b)(6)]

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/viktorasdauksas>

Sender: [(b)(6)]@state.gov>

Recipient: [(b)(6)]@state.gov>

From:	(b)(6)@state.gov>
To:	(b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject:	Re: Countering Russian Disinformation - Academic & Think-Tank Highlights - Fall 2020
Date:	Thu, 17 Dec 2020 18:18:23 +0000

not at all. I used to send it to everyone, but now they instituted that new rule about having to clear with FO everything we send to GEC all and it's just not worth it....

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Sent: Thursday, December 17, 2020 1:17 PM

To: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Subject: Re: Countering Russian Disinformation - Academic & Think-Tank Highlights - Fall 2020

oh good I'm glad it was not that much of a mistake....

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Sent: Thursday, December 17, 2020 1:16 PM

To: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Subject: Re: Countering Russian Disinformation - Academic & Think-Tank Highlights - Fall 2020

ooooo thank you 😊 Out of curiosity, did you have to get permission to share it with GEC-All?? I'd like to be able to share it with GEC-all, but don't want to have to get permission every single time....

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Sent: Thursday, December 17, 2020 1:15 PM

To: GEC <GEC@state.gov>

Subject: Countering Russian Disinformation - Academic & Think-Tank Highlights - Fall 2020

Countering Russian Disinformation Academic & Think-Tank Highlights Fall 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Research on Russia's disinformation tools and tactic shows that RT uses Soviet-era organizational behavior to produce anti-Western content; that pro-Kremlin outlets launder disinformation by intentionally mistranslating foreign media outlets; and that the Wagner Group spearheads information operations in Africa. Research on the effectiveness of source labeling and media literacy interventions found they reduced engagement with Kremlin disinformation. Meanwhile, research related to audiences vulnerable to disinformation shows that prior engagement and agreement with fake news may better predict the likelihood of sharing disinformation, that those over 65 are more likely to share disinformation, and that conspiracy theorizing fulfills psychological needs. Additionally, analysis of the U.S. presidential election shows links between domestic and international disinformation framing, reinforces the need for a whole-of-society approach to election integrity. Finally, in the policy realm, gaps left by media

platforms might be filled by EU regulation and the U.S. could use increased messaging to Russian citizens to achieve a variety of goals.

ACADEMIC/PEER REVIEWED:

RT news uses Soviet-era organizational behavior to produce anti-Western content in accordance with the goals of Russian state defense policy: Professional journalistic skills are not prioritized in the hiring process. Following hiring, a socialization process fosters loyalty and conformance to RT's organizational practices. Such practices most prominently include self-censorship and media distortion. Through these methods, RT is able to fulfil three goals: first, to push the idea that Western countries have as many problems as Russia; second, to encourage conspiracy theories about media institutions in the West in order to discredit and delegitimize them; and third, to create controversy about RT, making it appear that the channel is important. (Mona Elswah and Philip N. Howard, Oxford Academic Journal of Communication, "Anything that Causes Chaos": The Organizational Behavior of Russia Today (RT), October 2020)

Studies analyzing 2,634 individuals found that repeated exposure to disinformation may increase individuals' likelihood of sharing it, even if they don't believe it. Older adults, especially those aged over 65, were by far the most likely to spread disinformation: Prior familiarity with false narratives as well as the belief that these stories or their goal were likely true and aligned with users' pre-existing values predicted the likelihood that users would share disinformation. While levels of digital literacy, authoritativeness of a source, and a posts' popularity had little to no effect on increasing or decreasing the spread of disinformation in these studies, the study has a number of limitations as it relies on self-reports rather than genuine behavior. The study implies that "trying to raise digital literacy across the population is unlikely to be a complete solution," and that "interventions are likely to be most effective when targeted at individuals who already hold an opinion or belief, rather than trying to change people's minds. While this would be more useful to those seeking to spread disinformation, it could also give insights into populations worth targeting with countermessages." In addition, it is more effective to have messages posted many times over rather than manipulating metrics that show popularity. (Tom Buchanan, PLOS ONE, Why do people spread false information online? The effects of message and viewer characteristics on self-reported likelihood of sharing social media disinformation, October 2020)

Narratives related to ostensible voting-fraud in the 2020 U.S. election link isolated issues in an attempt to show that there was a vast conspiracy determining the outcome, and that therefore the outcome is fraudulent: If believed by a large number of Americans, these delegitimization narratives constitute a major concern, however any intervention against domestic disinformation risks being cast as censorship. New platforms like Parler promote their services on the basis of freedom of speech, but because Parler lacks an election integrity team—like those employed by Facebook and Twitter to flag misinformation—their service is easily targeted for monetary and ideological purposes. Disinformation campaigns run continuously both domestically and internationally, but by monitoring social media, false narratives can be identified early enough for fact checkers to limit their impact. (Freeman Spogli Institute for

International Studies, Stanford University, Society Needs to Adapt to a World of Widespread Disinformation, October 2020)

THINK-TANK ANALYSIS:

Increasing efforts to communicate directly with Russian citizens "might even add stability to the US-Russian relationship by establishing a balance of information power": Increased messaging to Russian citizens would be more symmetrical than a cyber operation, would be less likely to spillover to other domains, and can be targeted to achieve a variety of goals. Direct messaging could be used for several purposes: to encourage incremental change, to "[inflamm] popular discontent in Russia", as a public diplomacy medium, or to demonstrate American capacity to penetrate Russia's information environment. The U.S. could address Russians directly or work with non-governmental activists. But any strategy "must include alternative technical options" to remain effective in the face of Russian internet shutdowns or censorship efforts. (Thomas Kent, The Jamestown Foundation, US Messaging to Russian Citizens: Time to Step It Up?, November 2020)

Pro-Kremlin outlets launder disinformation by intentionally mistranslating foreign media outlets: Outlets peddling disinformation first identify an article in a respected foreign media outlet on a topic which is related to the narrative that the pro-Kremlin outlet wants to advance. Next, an original Russian-language piece is written that misquotes or misrepresents quotes from the reputable foreign media article, even going so far as to falsify information. The Russian language article is then translated into another language and published in outlets that appear unrelated to pro-Kremlin outlets. This form of disinformation laundering is difficult to spot because it requires competency in several languages. (EUvsDisinfo, From English into Russian into Czech: Re-Translation as a Manipulative Tool, October 2020)

"Dispatched in dozens of countries, the Wagner Group has been tasked with implementing the Kremlin's foreign policy and deploying aggressive tactics, such as industrial-scale manufacturing of fake news, intimidation of journalists and political opponents, election interference" and more: Russian interests in Africa include lucrative security and mining contracts and attempts to influence UN General Assembly votes in Russia's favor. In addition to conventional soft power initiatives, Russian financial support for the Central African Republic's cash-strapped media sector contributes to its use as a pro-Russia propaganda tool. Counter disinformation efforts will require financial support as a substitute for Russian money as well as an acknowledgment of high rates of illiteracy. (Nathalia Dukhan, Atlantic Council, Central African Republic: Ground Zero for Russian Influence in Central Africa, October 2020)

Source labeling and media literacy interventions reduce engagement with Kremlin disinformation: IREX's Learn to Discern approach revealed several key findings on the effect media literacy messaging could have on social media users. Kremlin propaganda evokes emotional responses, which drives propaganda's rapid spread. However, brief media literacy interventions of only two minutes can shift behaviors of hard-to-reach groups with the strongest effect on partisan news consumers. Labeling propaganda with its source also reduces the

likelihood that partisan participants will like/share content, and the two interventions are complementary. The trial results are promising, but further research is required to understand more about specific types of media literacy messages, the audiences they best influence, and the effects of different levels of exposure. (IREX, Randomized Control Trial Finds IREX's Media Literacy Messages to be Effective in Reducing Engagement with Disinformation, October 2020)

The majority of misinformation narratives about the 2020 U.S. election originated from domestic actors and have been utilized by foreign state actors to sow domestic and foreign distrust in the U.S. political system: After the 2020 presidential election, there has been a strong influx of false and misleading information about the validity of the election results and the integrity of the voting process. The election received large amounts of coverage from Russian and Iranian state media, while Chinese state media accounts provided far less. Russian and Iranian state media served as amplifiers of false and misleading information, often retweeting prominent American outlets or individuals, with a heavy reliance on President Trump's twitter feed to advance claims mentioning "fraud," "rigged" or "steal." China, however, added disclaimers to its retweets, indicating that claims were "unproven" or "unsubstantiated." Each country's amplification of misinformation narratives (or lack thereof) reflects their preferences in information strategies as well as their preferences between the two presidential candidates. Additionally, all three countries have provided significant coverage of unrest and sporadic violence in the U.S., following a pattern of exaggerating the supposed decline of U.S. society. (Bret Schafer, Alliance for Securing Democracy, Foreign Amplification of Voter Fraud Narratives: How Russian, Iranian, and Chinese Messengers Have Leveraged Post-Election Unrest in the United States, November 2020)

THREAT AGNOSTIC:

In the short term, the U.S. has been slow to adapt to emerging threats from authoritarian states, but can regain advantage in the long term via four spheres of competition: political, economic, technological, and informational: Authoritarians exploit democracies' openness, manipulate information, and penetrate permissive political influence systems, but the U.S. can respond by strengthening key institutions, cultivating civic engagement, and highlighting the corruption and political repression of autocracies. The U.S. must make strategic investments at home—including in infrastructure, education, and basic research—while also supporting innovation and development in key industries. The U.S. should work with other democracies to shape global technology governance to ensure that norms, standards, and new technologies are conducive rather than corrosive to democracy. Trusted information is the foundation of a healthy society, and democracies need to counter threats of authoritarian interference in the information space without compromising the democratic value of free expression. To do so, the United States should embrace media and digital literacy education, ensure that information architecture supports democratic values, challenge authoritarian narrative dominance, and reinvigorate independent journalism. (Alliance for Securing Democracy, Linking Values and Strategy: How Democracies Can Offset Autocratic Advances, October 2020)

Inauthentic Twitter accounts can be identified by an algorithm that assesses only behavioral features: An algorithm using behavioral rather than linguistic features eliminates the need for language-specific processing and therefore provides more utility. The relevant behavioral features included above-average number of retweets, hashtags, URLs, and replies. Additionally, because inauthentic accounts are operated by state agency employees, activity is higher during weekdays and regular office hours. Identifying inauthentic accounts based solely on behavior can be enriched by considering other behavioral features of employee-run inauthentic accounts and by evaluating behavior-based algorithms against more diverse sets of accounts. (Saleh Alhazbi, IEEE Access, Behavior-Based Machine Learning Approaches to Identify State-Sponsored Trolls on Twitter, November 2020)

In order to overcome COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy due to misinformation, governments must start an open and transparent dialogue with the public regarding vaccine deployment, which is critical to build support about who has vaccination priority, address fears about safety, communicate complex information about multiple vaccines, and counter misinformation and public complacency: The most pressing challenges include making vaccinations convenient by building on existing immunization programs, implementing decentralized local vaccination programs tailored to community needs, adopting transparent principles of vaccination priority groups including sufficient public debate, empowering the public to spot and report misinformation, and ensuring accountability for media companies to remove harmful information and punishing those who spread misinformation. (Melinda Mills, The British Academy, Vaccine Hesitancy Threatens to Undermine Pandemic Response, November 2020)

The Biden Administration can combat disinformation by pushing for new governmental structures and legislation: Jankowicz recommends that the U.S. create a counter-disinformation czar and a corresponding directorate within the National Security Council. This office would monitor the information ecosystem for threats and coordinate interagency policy responses. According to the author, the Biden Administration should encourage Congress to establish a federal commission for online oversight and transparency. The new administration should consult and learn from allies with decades of disinformation experience while making generational investments in building media and digital literacy programs. Finally, the Biden Administration should bolster public media as an alternative to for-profit news, which has helped drive polarization and distrust of the media in the U.S. (Nina Jankowicz, Foreign Affairs, How To Defeat Disinformation: An Agenda for the Biden Administration, November 2020)

EVENT READOUTS:

Ensuring the integrity of the U.S. election required a whole-of-society-approach including investigative agencies, platforms, journalists, civil society groups, and subject area experts, all of whom helped to inform the public and counter the spread of disinformation: Further collaboration will be required to continue addressing threats in the cyber environment. DHS/CISA's budget should be nearly doubled and its authority expanded. The old regulatory framework is obsolete; a new regulatory framework must address the taxonomy

of cyber threats, ensuring platforms are accountable, including data privacy and protection. The U.S. needs to lead in this regard or else other countries will shape the regulation of the cyber environment for their needs. There needs to be an infusion of IT modernization at the state and local level to address outdated systems, and Congress needs more personnel with a tech background who understand cyber threats and can inform legislators. There must be consequences for companies when they fail to protect consumer data, and for bad actors, foreign and domestic, who attempt to spread disinformation while respecting the hallmark of free speech. (The Aspen Institute Cyber Summit – Inside the 2020 Election, Navigating an Infodemic – From Elections to Vaccines, The View from Capitol Hill, December 2020)

When people experience feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and helplessness caused by significant events of great consequence that have no immediate explanation, they may turn to conspiracy theories (CTs) as a psychological coping mechanism: CTs help explain political misfortunes for those on the losing side, especially if these people feel helpless; it is easier for them to believe the other side cheated rather than accept that their ideas were rejected. When CTs lead to real world consequences like vaccine refusal and political violence, their spread must be addressed. CTs spread because the business model that drives social media engagement is based primarily on passing of misinformation and should be addressed through platform regulation and algorithm transparency. Attempts at inoculation, like the effort to inform the U.S. public of the delay in tallying the 2020 vote, are helpful, but conspiracy theories will continue to take hold and spread until policy makers can better address the large-scale events that cause people to connect to CTs to fulfill their psychological needs. (Dr. Aleksandra Cichocka, Karen Douglas, Jaron Harambam, Joanne Miller PhD, Apolitical, The Infodemic: The Rise of Conspiracy Theories and How Governments Can Respond, December 2020)

To regulate the misinformation crisis the European Union should implement standardized metrics and annual goals monitored by a regulatory authority: The recent fact-checking failures in regard to the U.S. presidential election have caused concerns over the rapid spread of misinformation in the European Union. Various social media outlets are inconsistent in their policies and are not quick enough to label information as false, allowing for a greater impact of disinformation on the population. Additionally, the lack of transparency surrounding fact-checking policies has led the public to believe that the removal of harmful misinformation campaigns is a form of censorship. To tackle the spread of misinformation, social media outlets should be quicker, more transparent, and also provide audiences with the correct information in their approaches to misinformation. (Sarah Andrew, Christoph Schott, EU Disinfo Lab, Regulating Disinformation in the EU - Cautionary Tales from the US Elections, November 2020)

FURTHER READINGS:

Leaks, Lies, and Altered Tape: Russia's Maturing Information Manipulation Playbook
(Jessica Brandt and Amber Frankland, Alliance for Securing Democracy, October 2020, 30-minute read)

Moscow's Disinformation Offensive During COVID-19: The Case of Lithuania

(Richard Weitz and Lukas Pieciukaitis, The Hudson Institute, October 2020, 20-min read)

Putin, Putinism, and the Domestic Determinants of Russian Foreign Policy
(Michael McFaul, *International Security*, October 2020, 45-minute read)

Russian Narratives on Election Fraud
(Ben Nimmo and the Graphika Team, Election Integrity Partnership, November 2020, 15-min read)

Visualising Influence: Information Bubbles and Ideological Proximities on Czech, Hungarian & Slovak Facebook
(Miroslava Sawiris, GLOBSEC Policy Institute, October 2020, 30-minute read)

How Journalists Become an Unwitting Cog in the Influence Machine
(Alicia Wanless, Laura Walters, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2020, 10-minute read)

Foreign Interference in the 2020 Election
(William Marcellino, Christian Johnson, Marek N. Posard, Todd C. Helmus, RAND, October 2020, 45-minute read)

Cyber-Enabled Foreign Interference in Elections and Referendums
(Sarah O'Connor, Fergus Hanson, Emilia Currey, Tracy Beattie, ASPI, October 2020, 30-minute read)

KEY ACADEMIC COUNTER-DISINFO RESOURCES & TOOLS:

Fighting Disinformation Online: A Database of Web Tools, RAND Corporation

Media Well, Social Science Research Council

ComProp Navigator, Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford

Hamilton 2.0, Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund

The Debunking Handbook 2020, Center for Climate Change Communication, George Mason University

Please note these summaries of academic research are compiled with the help of students and are for informational purposes only; they do not imply USG endorsement of the views expressed in the articles or their summaries. To receive GEC Academic & Think-Tank Highlights on Countering China's, Iran's, Russia's, and/or Terrorist/Violent Extremist's Propaganda and Disinformation please email (b)(6)@state.gov or visit GEC IQ.

(b)(6)

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Top 10 U.S. Government Counter Disinformation & Propaganda Academic & Think-Tank Research Topics



GEC Mission: "To direct, lead, synchronize, integrate, and coordinate efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and foreign non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining or influencing the policies, security, or stability of the United States, its allies, and partner nations."

Sender: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Recipient: (b)(6)@state.gov>

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: (b)(6) LTC USARMY NG WAARNG (USA)
(b)(6)
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] Countering Russian Disinformation - Academic & Think-Tank Highlights - Fall 2020
Date: Fri, 18 Dec 2020 18:42:24 +0000

Dear (b)(6)
please find a one pager on GEC-IQ attached.
Warm regards,
(b)(6)

From: (b)(6) LTC USARMY NG WAARNG (USA) (b)(6)
Sent: Friday, December 18, 2020 1:00 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Countering Russian Disinformation - Academic & Think-Tank Highlights - Fall 2020

(b)(6)

Thanks! I've been sharing these with the Theater Information Operations Group over our MS Teams channel. Also, I've noticed your banner states that one could visit GEC IQ to pull the products. Is GEC IQ internal to DoS network or is this something interagency partners could get access to? Is it on NIPR, SIPR, or JWICS?

Thanks,

v/r

(b)(6)

LTC, MI, FA30

S-2, 56th Theater Information Operations Group

Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA

Office: (b)(6)

Cell: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, December 17, 2020 10:09 AM
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Countering Russian Disinformation - Academic & Think-Tank Highlights - Fall 2020

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

Studies analyzing 2,634 individuals found that repeated exposure to disinformation may increase individual likelihood of sharing social media posts over 65, were by far the most likely to spread disinformation: Prior familiarity with false narratives as well as trust in news sources and political values predicted the likelihood that users would share disinformation. While levels of digital literacy, authority, and trust in news sources predicted the spread of disinformation in these studies, the study has a number of limitations as it relies on self-reports rather than experimental manipulation. “While this is unlikely to be a complete solution,” and that “interventions are likely to be most effective when targeted at those who are most likely to spread disinformation.” While this would be more useful to those seeking to spread disinformation, it could also give insights into popular narratives. The study was posted many times over rather than manipulating metrics that show popularity. (Tom Buchanan, PLOS ONE, Washington, DC, October 2020) reported likelihood of sharing social media < Caution-https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0239666 >, October 2020)

Narratives related to ostensible voting-fraud in the 2020 U.S. election link isolated issues in an attempt outcome is fraudulent: If believed by a large number of Americans, these delegitimization narratives constitute censorship. New platforms like Parler promote their services on the basis of freedom of speech, but because misinformation—their service is easily targeted for monetary and ideological purposes. Disinformation campaign narratives can be identified early enough for fact checkers to limit their impact. (Freeman Spogli Institute for Disinformation < Caution-<https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/society-needs-adapt-world-widespread-disinformation> > , October 2020)

THINK-TANK ANALYSIS:

Increasing efforts to communicate directly with Russian citizens "might even add stability to the US-Russian relationship: Russian citizens would be more symmetrical than a cyber operation, would be less likely to spillover to other purposes: to encourage incremental change, to "[inflamm] popular discontent in Russia", as a public environment. The U.S. could address Russians directly or work with non-governmental activists. But any strategy must avoid shutdowns or censorship efforts. (Thomas Kent, The Jamestown Foundation, US Messaging to Russian Citizens Needs to be Turned it-up/ > , November 2020)

Pro-Kremlin outlets launder disinformation by intentionally mistranslating foreign media outlets: Outlets which is related to the narrative that the pro-Kremlin outlet wants to advance. Next, an original Russian-language article even going so far as to falsify information. The Russian language article is then translated into another language. Laundering is difficult to spot because it requires competency in several languages. (EUvsDisinfo, From English into Russian into Czech re-translation as a manipulative tool/ > , October 2020)

"Dispatched in dozens of countries, the Wagner Group has been tasked with implementing the Kremlin's fake news, intimidation of journalists and political opponents, election interference" and more: Russian General Assembly votes in Russia's favor. In addition to conventional soft power initiatives, Russian financial support is a pro-Russia propaganda tool. Counter disinformation efforts will require financial support as a substitute for Russian Council, Central African Republic: Ground Zero for Russian Influence in Central Africa < Caution-<https://www.euractiv.com/en/russia/russian-influence-in-central-africa/> > , October 2020)

Source labeling and media literacy interventions reduce engagement with Kremlin disinformation: IREX's trial could have on social media users. Kremlin propaganda evokes emotional responses, which drives propaganda's success with hard-to-reach groups with the strongest effect on partisan news consumers. Labeling propaganda with its source and interventions are complementary. The trial results are promising, but further research is required to understand the effects of different levels of exposure. (IREX, Randomized Control Trial Finds IREX's Media Literacy Messages Be Effective Reducing Engagement < <https://www.irex.org/news/randomized-control-trial-finds-irexs-media-literacy-messages-be-effective-reducing-engagement> > , October 2020)

The majority of misinformation narratives about the 2020 U.S. election originated from domestic actors: U.S. political system: After the 2020 presidential election, there has been a strong influx of false and misleading information. The election received large amounts of coverage from Russian and Iranian state media, while Chinese state media also spread misleading information, often retweeting prominent American outlets or individuals, with a heavy reliance on headlines. However, added disclaimers to its retweets, indicating that claims were "unproven" or "unsubstantiated." Each outlet used different information strategies as well as their preferences between the two presidential candidates. Additionally, all three followed a pattern of exaggerating the supposed decline of U.S. society. (Bret Schafer, Alliance for Securing Democracy, Social Media Messengers Have Leveraged Post-Election Unrest in the United States < Caution-<https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/social-media-messengers-have-leveraged-post-election-unrest-in-the-united-states> > , October 2020)

THREAT AGNOSTIC:

In the short term, the U.S. has been slow to adapt to emerging threats from authoritarian states, but can be more effective if it is more technologically, and informationally: Authoritarians exploit democracies' openness, manipulate information, and undermine democratic institutions, cultivating civic engagement, and highlighting the corruption and political repression of autocracies. The U.S. should work with basic research—while also supporting innovation and development in key industries. The U.S. should work with new technologies are conducive rather than corrosive to democracy. Trusted information is the foundation of a free information space without compromising the democratic value of free expression. To do so, the United States should support democratic values, challenge authoritarian narrative dominance, and reinvigorate independent journalism. (Autocratic Advances < Caution-<https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/linking-values-and-strategy/> > , October 2020)

Inauthentic Twitter accounts can be identified by an algorithm that assesses only behavioral features: A new algorithm for identifying specific processing and therefore provides more utility. The relevant behavioral features included above-average activity, accounts are operated by state agency employees, activity is higher during weekdays and regular office hours. Identifying features of employee-run inauthentic accounts and by evaluating behavior-based algorithms against more diverse data sets. (To Identify State-Sponsored Trolls on Twitter < Caution-<https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=921111> > , November 2020)

In order to overcome COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy due to misinformation, governments must start an open dialogue to build support about who has vaccination priority, address fears about safety, communicate complex information, and remove harmful information and punishing those who spread misinformation. The most pressing challenges include making vaccinations convenient by building on existing immunization programs, adopting transparent principles of vaccination priority groups including sufficient public debate, empowering the public to remove harmful information and punishing those who spread misinformation. (Melinda Mills, The British Academy, Vaccine Hesitancy Threatens to Undermine Pandemic Response < Caution-<https://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/vaccine-hesitancy-threatens-to-undermine-pandemic-response/> > , November 2020)

The Biden Administration can combat disinformation by pushing for new governmental structures and a corresponding directorate within the National Security Council. This office would monitor the information ecosystem. The Administration should encourage Congress to establish a federal commission for online oversight and transparency. The Administration should encourage Congress to establish a federal commission for online oversight and transparency while making generational investments in building media and digital literacy programs. Finally, the Administration has helped drive polarization and distrust of the media in the U.S. (Nina Jankowicz, Foreign Affairs, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-11-19/how-defeat-disinformation?utm_medium=email&utm_source=mailing&utm_campaign=20201119_00155d43b2cd&emdi=660175d1-5f2b-eb11-9fb4-00155d43b2cd&ceid=258074 > , November 2020)

EVENT READOUTS:

Ensuring the integrity of the U.S. election required a whole-of-society-approach including investigative journalism, helped to inform the public and counter the spread of disinformation: Further collaboration will be required. The old regulatory framework is obsolete; a new regulatory framework needs to be developed for privacy and protection. The U.S. needs to lead in this regard or else other countries will shape the regulation of the state and local level to address outdated systems, and Congress needs more personnel with a tech background when they fail to protect consumer data, and for bad actors, foreign and domestic, who attempt to spread disinformation. (Inside the 2020 Election, Navigating an Infodemic – From Elections to Vaccines, The View from Capitol Hill < Caution-<https://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/vaccine-hesitancy-threatens-to-undermine-pandemic-response/> > , November 2020)

When people experience feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and helplessness caused by significant events of global crises (CTs) as a psychological coping mechanism: CTs help explain political misfortunes for those on the losing side rather than accept that their ideas were rejected. When CTs lead to real world consequences like vaccine refusal that drives social media engagement is based primarily on passing of misinformation and should be addressed through public information. Public information, such as updates on the U.S. public of the delay in tallying the 2020 vote, are helpful, but conspiracy theories will continue to spread. People tend to connect to CTs to fulfill their psychological needs. (Dr. Aleksandra Cichocka, Karen Douglas, *Conspiracy Theories and the Pandemic: A Workshop* / > Apolitical, *The Infodemic: The Rise of Conspiracy Theories and How Governments Can Respond* <

To regulate the misinformation crisis the European Union should implement standardized metrics and a code of conduct: The events leading up to the U.S. presidential election have caused concerns over the rapid spread of misinformation in the European Union. The EU has started to label information as false, allowing for a greater impact of disinformation on the population. Additionally, the removal of harmful misinformation campaigns is a form of censorship. To tackle the spread of misinformation, the EU is working to correct information in their approaches to misinformation. (Sarah Andrew, Christoph Schott, *EU Disinfo Lab* < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFs7zCzamal&t=22s> > , November 2020)

FURTHER READINGS:

Leaks, Lies, and Altered Tape: Russia's Maturing Information Manipulation Playbook < Caution-<https://securingdemocracy.org/leaks-lies-and-altered-tape-russias-maturing-information-manipulation-playbook> > (Jessica Brandt and Amber Frankland, Alliance for Securing Democracy, October 2020, 30-minute read)

Moscow's Disinformation Offensive During COVID-19: The Case of Lithuania < Caution-http://media.hudson.org.s3.amazonaws.com/Weitz_Moscow's%20Disinformation%20Offensive%20During%20COVID-19 > (Richard Weitz and Lukas Pieciukaitis, The Hudson Institute, October 2020, 20-min read)

Putin, Putinism, and the Domestic Determinants of Russian Foreign Policy < Caution-<https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2020.11.1> > (Michael McFaul, *International Security*, October 2020, 45-minute read)

Russian Narratives on Election Fraud < Caution-<https://www.eipartnership.net/rapid-response/russian-narratives-on-election-fraud> > (Ben Nimmo and the Graphika Team, Election Integrity Partnership, November 2020, 15-min read)

Visualising Influence: Information Bubbles and Ideological Proximities on Czech, Hungarian & Slovak Facebook content/uploads/2020/10/Visualising_influence_version-for-print.pdf > (Miroslava Sawiris, GLOBSEC Policy Institute, October 2020, 30-minute read)

How Journalists Become an Unwitting Cog in the Influence Machine < Caution-<https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/10/29/how-journalists-become-an-unwitting-cog-in-the-influence-machine> > (Alicia Wanless, Laura Walters, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2020, 10-minute read)

Foreign Interference in the 2020 Election < Caution-https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA704-2.html?utm_source=WhatCountsEmail&utm_medium=NPA:2581:6420:Oct%208,%202020%205:23:45%20AM > (William Marcellino, Christian Johnson, Marek N. Posard, Todd C. Helmus, RAND, October 2020, 45-minute read)

Cyber- < Caution-<http://aspi.org.au/report/cyber-enabled-foreign-interference-elections-and-referendums> > E < referendums > nabled < Caution-<http://aspi.org.au/report/cyber-enabled-foreign-interference-elections-and-referendums> > oreign < Caution-<http://aspi.org.au/report/cyber-enabled-foreign-interference-elections-and-referendums> >

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(Sarah O'Connor, Fergus Hanson, Emilia Currey, Tracy Beattie, ASPI, October 2020, 30-minute read)

KEY ACADEMIC COUNTER-DISINFO RESOURCES & TOOLS:

Fighting Disinformation Online: A Database of Web Tools < Caution-https://www.rand.org/research/projects/tr

Media Well < Caution-https://mediawell.ssrc.org/ > ,Social Science Research Council

ComProp Navigator < Caution-https://navigator.oii.ox.ac.uk/ > ,Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford

Hamilton 2.0 < Caution-https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/hamilton-dashboard/ > , Alliance for Securing De

The Debunking Handbook 2020 < Caution-https://www.climatechangecommunication.org/wp-content/uploads/
Mason University

Please note these summaries of academic research are compiled with the help of students and are for informational purposes only; they do not imply USG endorsement of the views expressed in the articles or their summaries. To receive GEC Academic & Think-Tank Highlights on Countering China's, Iran's, Russia's, and/or Terrorist/Violent Extremist's Propaganda and Disinformation please (b)(6)@state.gov < Caution-mailto:(b)(6)@state.gov > or visit GEC IQ.

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Top 10 U.S. Government Counter Disinformation & Propaganda Academic & Think-Tank Research Topics < Caution-
https://disinfocloud.com/blog/gec-top10researchtopics >



GEC Mission: "To direct, lead, synchronize, integrate, and coordinate efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and foreign non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining or influencing the policies, security, or stability of the United States, its allies, and partner nations."

Sender: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Recipient: (b)(6) LTC USARMY NG WAARNG (USA)
(b)(6) mil@mail.mil>



The Global Engagement Center's Resources for Public Affairs Officers

Our Mission: The GEC's congressional mandate is to "direct, lead, synchronize, integrate, and coordinate efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and foreign non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining or influencing the policies, security, or stability of the United States, its allies, and partner nations."

GEC Programming Opportunities

In collaboration with bureaus and posts, the GEC has executed a wide variety of initiatives to **counter foreign propaganda and disinformation** coming from **China, Russia, Iran, and international terrorist organizations**. We hope to partner with you as well!

The GEC seeks to develop and launch programs that counter foreign propaganda and disinformation by:



Exposing It To The Public



Providing Media Literacy And Other Trainings



Executing Communications Campaigns Using Ad-Tech



Deploying Innovative Technology



Leveraging Data Analytics



Building Technical Skills Of Civil Society & NGOs

Partnering On Your Projects

We support post-driven initiatives through our **Counter Propaganda and Disinformation Fund**. Find information on how we can partner with you [here](#) or contact GEC-CPDFund@state.gov.

Partnering On NGO Projects

We partner with posts to engage NGOs, civil society groups, and other organizations on counter propaganda and disinformation projects in their host countries. **Posts can submit proposals [here](#).**

Partnering On Grants

We collaborate with other bureaus and offices to develop and publish **Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs)** throughout the year. To sign up for alerts, visit the **[RSS Feeds](#)** on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)

GEC Resources


Technology & Analysis

1. **Original analysis & reporting** on Russian, Chinese, and Iranian propaganda and disinformation such as this [report](#).
To subscribe to these reports, email Info@geciq.com.
2. **The Global Engagement Center - Insights Quantified (GEC-IQ)** is an online-based collaborative, centralized repository of analytics tools and data on disinformation and propaganda. *GEC-IQ Global* allows for similar collaboration with foreign partners.
To sign up, email Info@geciq.com.



3. **Disinfo Cloud** is a website that allows GEC partners to search for cutting edge tools and technologies to counter propaganda and disinformation.
To sign up, email GECIncubator@state.gov



In partnership with the Global Engagement Center  GEC

Training & Services

1. **Elections Security** initiatives for foreign partners with [Fly Away Teams](#).
2. Targeted **Strategic Communications Campaigns** for Posts.
3. **Hackathons**, **Journalist and Civil Society Trainings**, and **Speaker Programs**.
4. **Webinars** with Regional PD offices to educate post staff on foreign propaganda and disinformation (example, [here](#)).
5. **Materials highlighting** the propaganda and disinformation tactics used by state and non-state actors, such as monthly [dispatches](#) and [cables](#).

To request these services or contact the GEC for any other reason, please email GECStaffAssistants@state.gov

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: Gabrielle(Potts), Lea (b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>
Bray, Leah (b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
CC: (b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 12.11.2020
Date: Fri, 11 Dec 2020 17:57:11 +0000

Ma'am

Here is your email sending out GEC's Operations Slides to the Secretary and GEC's Operational Report. I've also attached the A&R reports referenced in the report.

(b) is email is directly below and the rest of the distro list is below that.

(b)(6)

(b)(6)	all @state.gov; @usaid.gov;@nsa.eop.gov; @mail.mil
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Colleagues,

Please find our GEC Weekly Operational Report below. I have also attached our abbreviated GEC Operations Update slides prepared for the Secretary, and the GEC reports referenced in the Operational Report.

Have a wonderful weekend.

Best,

(b)(6)

Lea Gabrielle

Special Envoy

Global Engagement Center

U.S. Department of State

(b)(6)@state.gov



From: Bray, Leah (b)(6)@state.gov>

Sent: Friday, December 11, 2020 12:54 PM

To: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Cc:



12/11/2020

Colleagues,

(U) Ongoing GEC Activities To Expose Propaganda and Disinformation.

(U) Countering Russian Disinformation.

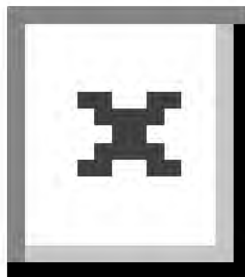
- **(SBU) GEC-Supported Hybrid COE Leads Online Exercise for Pandemic Resilient Response 2020.** The European Center of Excellence (COE) for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, Finland, together with the Multinational Medical Coordination Centre/European Medical Command and the German Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, hosted the November 24-26 Resilient Response 2020 (RERE 2020) exercise. The RERE 2020 online pandemic response exercise allowed national teams to simulate protecting their populations from a novel virus, while simultaneously countering hybrid threats. **The exercise was designed and administered by Shiho Rybski, a U.S. GEC sponsored employee to the Hybrid COE whose position of Director of Training and Exercises is funded by the GEC.**

- **(SBU)** The exercise featured 12 national teams and representatives from EU, NATO, and EUCOM, with more than 120 participants across Europe. Teams designed and implemented strategies to overcome the pandemic and thwart hybrid threats using national and multilateral response options. Findings will be presented as part of Germany's EU Presidency conclusions, which will focus on COVID-19 and ways in which hybrid threats such as disinformation challenge resiliency.
- **(SBU)** A post-exercise evaluation found that nations made good choices when encountering hybrid threats; however, many responses to disinformation were reactive, not proactive.

- ~~(SBU)~~ The COE anticipates drafting a Strategic Analysis Paper by February 2021 on the wargame's outcomes that synergizes previous pandemic response exercises.

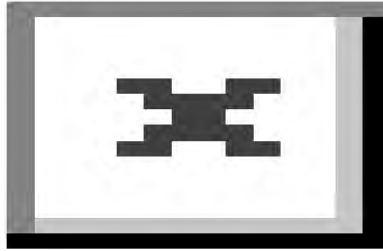
(U) Countering Iranian Disinformation.

- ~~(SBU)~~ **GEC Partner Podcast Series Tops Persian Language Downloads.** *Short and Sweet* is a multimedia production about world politics that includes audio podcasts and supporting YouTube videos. **It is now the most downloaded Persian-language educational podcast on iTunes, outpacing even BBC Persian.** *Short and Sweet* works to provide audiences a more comprehensive view of the world today. Topping the ratings in this way demonstrates the value and impact of GEC-supported programs in the region.



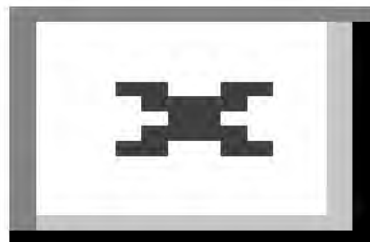
(U) Image of "Short and Sweet" podcast cover.

- ~~(SBU)~~ **GEC-Partner Broadcast Exposes Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Use of Child Soldiers.** Following reports of child fighters dying in Deir ez-Zor Province, TV program *Political Depth* discussed the IRGC's practice of recruiting Syrian children into the militias it sponsors. Program guests explained that Iran's longstanding use of child soldiers in Syria had become more widespread in the past 2 years, as impoverished parents increasingly "are forced to accept the recruitment of their children," and that only in Somalia is child recruitment more common than in Syria.
 - ~~(SBU)~~ **In addition to airing on TV, the episode was published on Halah Today's website, Facebook page (4.2 million followers), and YouTube channel (300k subscribers).**
 - (U) In a similar vein, another outlet reported on its Facebook page about the Fatemiyoun Brigade's announcement that it had recruited a new batch of child soldiers, and a third outlet published several photographs documenting the Iranian militia presence in eastern Syria, including images of child soldiers.



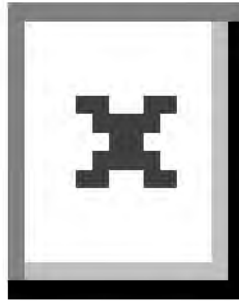
(U) Image from an interview on the "Political Depth" broadcast.

- **(SBU) GEC Partner Reports on Iranian Militias Spreading COVID-19 in Syria.** Ibrahim Al-Idlibi, a prominent media figure in the Syrian opposition, **gave an interview to *Al-Arabiya Al-Hadath*, during which he explained how the Iranian militia presence in Northwest Syria had exacerbated the COVID-19 epidemic in Syria.** He pointed out that fighters regularly cross into Syria and that the first cases of the disease in Syria emerged in regions where there is a heavy Iranian militia presence. He added that Syrian regime and Iranian militia strikes had displaced thousands of civilians into Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps, where cramped conditions and limited access to sanitary facilities have contributed to the spread of COVID-19.



(U) Image from Interview about Iranian role in COVID-19 spread in Syria.

- **(SBU) Great Iranian Firewall?** Regime hardliners and modernizers continue to struggle over whether to take additional steps to restrict access to the Internet. This GEC partner's cartoon depicts a regime hardliner coming to the realization that the Iranian voices seeking factual information and demanding their right to free expressions are too numerous to silence.



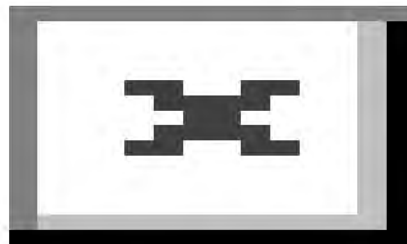
(U) Image caption: What? We cannot make them all shut up!

- **(SBU) GEC Pushed Digital Media Messaging in Arab Media To Highlight Iranian Malign Influence.** The GEC acquired and pushed 11 unique video clips to Arabic media the week of November 29 to counter Iranian disinformation and propaganda in the Middle East.
 - (U) Arab audiences who saw these news broadcasts mostly saw content that highlighted:
 - **(SBU)** Hizballah drug smuggling in southern Syria.
 - **(SBU)** Lebanese protests condemning Hizballah's lack of prosecution despite being involved in the Beirut port explosion.
 - **(SBU)** Public doubt that Iran would be able to fulfill its promise to respond to Mohsen Fakhrizadeh's death.
 - **(SBU)** Iranian mines interfering with Iraqi agriculture.
 - **(SBU)** Criticisms of Houthi control of Yemen's Central Bank.
 - **(SBU)** Children killed by the Houthis in Yemen.
 - **(SBU)** The 11 video clips appeared 26 times on Arabic network television, including broadcasts by MENA TV, Al Hadath, Al Ghad Al Arabi, Rudaw, Al Jazeera, Belqees TV, and Roya, reaching a broad viewership base in the Middle East.

(U) Undermining and Exposing Terrorists.

- **(SBU) GEC Partner Broadcasts to Millions About ISIS Depravity and Community Resilience.** From November 19 to December 3, large regional Arabic television stations Sky News Arabia, Al-Arabiya, and Al-Hadath – as well as MENA TV, Al-Tagheer and Al-Ghad Al-Arabi – broadcast 8 previously produced media clips 34 times through the Digital Media Services (DMS) capability.
 - (U) Audiences viewing the broadcasts saw content highlighting:
 - **(SBU)** Kurdish forces rescuing children of ISIS-linked parents.
 - **(SBU)** A Syrian teacher's story of almost being executed by ISIS.

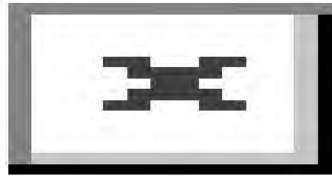
- (SBU) A mother still awaiting the return of her son who was kidnapped by ISIS 5 years ago.
- (SBU) Mosul youths rebuilding a church in their community.
- (SBU) ISF forces hunting down ISIS remnants along the Tigris river.
- (SBU) Iraqi military officials discussing intelligence operations to keep track of ISIS in western Iraq.
- (SBU) The Global Coalition vowing to help local forces fight ISIS in Syria.
- (SBU) These video clips support GEC's efforts to degrade the ISIS brand by providing fact-based, non-USG reporting on local perceptions of ISIS focused on events in Iraq and Syria. **The DMS produced-content from the 2-week period reached audiences through broadcasts on Sky News Arabia, which claims to have a viewership of 50 million, and Al-Arabiya and Al-Hadath, whose live stream broadcasts on YouTube reach a combined audience of about 10 million.**



(SBU) A Syrian teacher nearly executed by ISIS shares his experience. Aired by MENA TV on November 16.

(U) Countering CCP Disinformation.

- **(U) GEC Coordinates 15 Country Virtual Counter Foreign Interference Summit.**
 - (U) GEC Special Envoy Lea Gabrielle helped open the second iteration of the Australia-led Counter Foreign Interference Summit (vCFI) along with her Australian counterpart.
 - (U) The U.S. Department of Justice led the U.S. delegation consisting of representatives from across the interagency to this 2-day gathering of 15 like-minded countries plus the EU.
 - (U) Day one of vCFI offered participating governments insights from leading think tanks on trends in foreign interference, how to identify when influence moves into interference, and perspectives on direct political interference from threat actors.
 - (U) Day two moved into a robust discussion among participant states on arriving at common definitions of terms, principles and best practices and offered updates from the Summit's working groups that have been meeting over the past several months in advance of the Summit.



- **(U) GEC Launches Program To Expand Global Fact-Checking Network to the Pacific Islands and Balkans.** GEC launched a program with the prestigious Poynter Institute to expand its International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) to new partners in the critical regions of the Pacific Islands and the Balkans. The program will build the capacity of media and civil society organizations to meet IFCN's rigorous standards and code of principles. It will also monitor fact-checking trends, promote best practices and innovation in fact checking, and provide training and fellowships. GEC support enables Poynter to expand its network of 78 partners to new regions with critical fact-checking needs.

(U) Additional Significant GEC Activities.

- **(SBU) GEC Trains Ecuadorian Government Officials To Use GEC Data Sharing Platform To Support Fair Elections in 2021.** On December 2, the GEC delivered training on Global Engagement Center-Insights Quantified (GEC-IQ), the GEC's online collaborative analytics, coordination, cooperation, and data-sharing platform, to members of the Government of Ecuador in support of their counter-disinformation and counter-adversarial propaganda efforts in advance of the country's February 2021 elections for president and National Assembly members. The delivery of this training prior to the end of Calendar Year 2020 was a key deliverable in the U.S.-Ecuador Bilateral Expanded Political Dialogue. GEC analysts are planning ongoing engagements, including collaborative analysis, training, and technical assistance, in advance of the upcoming elections in Ecuador.
- **(SBU) GEC Online Campaign Underway To Bolster Restoration of Democracy in Venezuela Through Upcoming "People's Vote."** On December 4, the GEC launched an online campaign on Facebook and Instagram in support of Venezuelan Interim President Juan Guaidó's call for a "*consulta popular*" (people's vote) between December 7 and December 12. The campaign, which will remain active through December 12, is designed to increase support for, and participation in, the interim government's efforts to solicit feedback from the Venezuelan populace and to further cement rejection of the dictatorial regime of Nicolás Maduro.
- **(U) The GEC and DHS's Online Counter Disinformation Game, Harmony Square, Continues To Expand Its Reach.**

- (U) The GEC briefed Harmony Square to the NSC and interagency partners during a Sub-Counterterrorism Security Group on Terrorist Use of the Internet.
 - In addition, ECA's Lead Strategic Designer - Interactive Media and Games, (b)(6) spoke on a panel at the Games for Impact Conference on December 10. Shen highlighted the Harmony Square game as well as the GEC's role in its development.
 - (U) Harmony Square (<https://www.harmonysquare.game/welcome>) is an online interactive game that inoculates users against the effects of disinformation by making them aware of the features of normal disinformation campaigns.
 - (U) The Harmony Square game went live on November 6 and was reviewed by Harvard Misinformation Review, which commented on the potential impact and benefits of the game across international audiences.
 - (U) About 41,000 players from across the globe have played since its launch.
 - (U) Interest in the game has yielded more than 100 articles, newsletter mentions, and tweets, domestic and international, with more expected.
 - (U) The GEC will host an international virtual launch event for Harmony Square in mid-January 2021.
- **(U) On December 9, Tech Company Kharon Presented Three of Its Analytical Products in GEC's Final Tech Demo of 2020.** Kharon's representative described three innovative analytic tools that they developed: ClearView - a Web-based Search Tool, Dynamic Analytics - an Analytics Platform, and Kharon Brief - a Media Platform. Two members of the Department of Treasury also joined as co-panelists.
 - (U) Kharon goes beyond the government sanctions or export control lists to identify the networks of supporters and facilitators surrounding illicit actors that may also pose threats to global security through their support of terrorism, proliferation, rogue states, disinformation, and radicalization.
 - (U) Kharon leverages its subject matter and regional expertise to shed light on propaganda networks for customers looking to understand how these networks operate and how to avoid facilitating their operations. Rather than focusing on fake accounts and bots, Kharon maps out the individuals and entities behind disinformation and propaganda campaigns.
- **(U) The GEC's Disinfocloud.com (1204 users) Platform Informs the Interagency and Foreign Government Partners about Technology Capabilities and Assessments of Tools To Counter Propaganda and Disinformation (CPD).** Visit the following links for the latest Disinfo Cloud social media postings on Twitter, LinkedIn, the Disinfo Cloud blog, and the Disinfo Cloud Newsfeed.
 - (U) This week's Disinfo Cloud Digest included:
 - (U) The PRC, Russia, and Iran are all producing COVID-19 related disinformation to further their foreign policy goals, according to a new report by Canadian intelligence services.
 - (U) Russian disinformation is targeting the Central African Republic to increase the legitimacy of Russian mercenaries and undermine public trust in Western security services and international peacekeepers.

- (U) Bengali civil society is working to build societal resilience to online disinformation and hate speech after the increased digitization of society under COVID-19 increased the reach of fringe extremist narratives.

(U) Current Observations and Analysis.

- **(U) GEC Analytical Assessments Identify Hurdles on Path Towards Rejection of Venezuelan Dictatorship.** On December 3, the GEC delivered to the Department's WHA Bureau and the interagency community a series of four analytical products assessing the reception to, and perception of, the call for a "*consulta popular*" (people's vote) by the interim government. The analysis found that, in general, the Maduro regime has been somewhat successful in its efforts to co-opt messaging promoting the *consulta popular* and using it to promote the December 6 sham parliamentary elections. More importantly, the GEC found that much of the reticence towards participation in the *consulta popular* was based on increasing feelings of frustration among supporters of Interim President Juan Guaidó and the lack of progress towards removing Nicolás Maduro from power. In effect, the interim government has faced eroding support from its base while sustaining a messaging onslaught from the Maduro regime, problematizing future paths to Maduro's removal.
- **~~(SBU)~~ GEC Reports on Iran and the Iran Threat Network Messaging Describe Regional Response to Jared Kushner's Visit to Saudi Arabia and Qatar.** The GEC provided the interagency with a report analyzing Qatari and Saudi social media reactions to visits by Jared Kushner the previous week. In an analyzed sample of 3,000 Tweets, the top 3 sentiments were negative to Qatar (30 percent), negative to the U.S. or the Trump Administration directly (20 percent), and negative to Saudi Arabia (15 percent). Saudi and Qatari users exchanged criticisms, with users from each country condemning the other for supporting terrorism or supporting Zionism. Criticism of the U.S. most prominently characterized Kushner as a lame duck representative, interested only in personal gain or the protection of Israel, or as a much less desirable negotiator for Gulf unity compared to Kuwait's former Sheikh Sabah (a champion of Gulf Cooperation Council unification).
- **(U) GEC Report Analyzes Lebanese Twitter discussions of Hassan Nasrallah Following Rumors of the Hizballah Leader's Departure to Iran.** Discussions of Nasrallah are primarily (59 percent) positive, as pro-Hizballah users flooded the Twitter environment with old Nasrallah quotes regarding Lebanese and Hizballah military readiness. Criticisms of Nasrallah remained surprisingly low considering rumors of his departure. Hizballah has yet to officially comment on these rumors, though at least one Lebanese periodical quoted Hizballah "sources" claiming that the rumors are false.
- **~~(SBU)~~ GEC's Partner, FireEye, Reports on Disinformation Surrounding the 2020 Presidential Elections and Pandemic in Moldova.**
 - ~~(SBU)~~ FireEye identified multiple narratives surrounding both the recent presidential election in Moldova and the COVID-19 pandemic, which appear to

be leveraged to impact the election, undermine the relationship between the U.S. and Moldova and cast doubt on the scientific community within Moldova.

- (SBU) The report assesses with low confidence that the primary means for disinformation in Moldova include pro-Russian media outlets, the Moldovan Orthodox Church, and pro-Russian political parties such as the Partidul Nostru and Partidul politic "Sor."
- (U) **This report is attached and is shareable with all USG partners. FireEye requests USG partners do not share the report further without additional approvals.**

(U) In closing, thank you for your close collaboration with the GEC team. Our success is made possible only by the great colleagues we have in State, the interagency, and our international partnerships. We will continue to release these reports on a bi-weekly basis. Please contact the GEC's Acting PPO Director (b)(6)@state.gov if we can be of any assistance.

Best regards,

Leah Bray

Deputy Coordinator for Policy, Plans, and Operations

Sender:	(b)(6)@state.gov>
	Gabrielle(Potts), Lea (b)(6)@state.gov>;
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	Bray, Leah (b)(6)@state.gov>;
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To: (b)(6)@alutiiq.com>
CC: (b)(6)@alutiiq.com (b)(6)@alutiiq.com>;
(b)(6)@alutiiq.com (b)(6)@alutiiq.com>
Subject: FW: Intro to PPO's Operations Report and Slides for the Secretary Process
Date: Wed, 2 Dec 2020 16:54:39 +0000

FYSA

Respectfully,

(b)(6)

Resources
Global Engagement Center
U.S. Department of State

BB: (b)(6)



From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2020 1:23 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Intro to PPO's Operations Report and Slides for the Secretary Process

(b)(6)

I have to start by saying we are so grateful for your arrival. While (b)(6) and I are reasonably good writers, there are days when I can't spell my own name right. So, you can see that having me as chief editor is a bit problematic 😊.

In preparation for you joining PPO's team that drafts GEC's Weekly Operations Report and S-Slides, I thought it might be helpful to provide you with a brief description of the process and some background material. We'll go through all of this together sometime in the future, but this will give you something to think about between now and then. Don't worry, there is not expectation that you will have to do any of this until we've had a chance to talk.

- I've attached the last two weeks' version of the reports and slides.
- The AAR from two weeks ago. I wasn't able to create the AAR last week.
- Below are some the best practices that we've learned.

The general process works this way:

(b)(6) creates blank documents for us to populate that we can all access simultaneously on teams/browser Off Per 365 on Monday or Tuesday morning.

- The teams provide their input into a page we have set up teams by 3 pm on Tuesday afternoon. They are usually late but are beginning to get better.

(b)(6) pulls the raw input from the teams page and pastes it into the bottom of the Ops Report document.

(b)(6) makes the first cut at moving paragraphs that are worthy into the main body of the Ops Report. I occasionally help at this too.

- I then start working through the document to find gaps in the information that the teams provided us. I also start working on the initial formatting and editing.

(b)(6) starts identifying paragraphs that he thinks are worthy of the Secretary's attention and begins to assemble the slides.

- We keep this up until about 6:30 pm. We used to work later, but I've stopped that.
- I start back at the editing process early Wed morning, but then stop for the 9 am Operations Meeting (you will also listen in on this meeting to improve your awareness of GEC's operations).
- Once the Ops meeting is over, I finish up on the slides and we all continue to edit the documents. We also incorporate additional information that we have received from the teams in response to our requests.
- By 2 pm we submit the Ops Report and Slides to the Principal Deputy Coordinator, Danial Kimmage and Deputy Coordinator for Ops, Leah Bray for their review. They rarely review the docs until late in the day or occasionally early Thursday morning.
- We continue to review, tweak, and desperately search for the obvious typo that is completely invisible to us.
- By 8 am on Thursday morning I send the draft slides to the Special Envoy/Coordinator for her clearance.
- Once we have her clearance or noon, whichever comes first, we send the slides out for clearance with the relevant bureaus.
- Early Friday morning (b)(6) will copy the Ops Report (Word doc) into an email. This is a 30 second process on a desktop version of Word (OpenNet) and a 20 min process on Off Per 365. He then sends me the email and actual word and ppt docs.
- I finalize the email that Leah Bray will use to send out the Ops Report and send it to her for release.
- When Leah has sent her email, I use that to assemble the Special Envoy's email and send that for her to release.

Also, a word of caution. Working in DOS's Off Perm Office 365 is a bit frustrating. MS Word is a fine program, but the way Diplomatic Security and the IT folks have dialed it down is a bit challenging. Below are some tricks that I have discovered over the past months.

- The default formatting settings on Off Perm 365 can't be changed and don't match what we use. This results in a continual battle to determine who will win.
- I use the formatting tool to format the paragraphs to have zero spaces before and after paragraphs. This makes the spacing in the email version work out better. Sadly, every time you paste something into the doc, it changes this. It's a never-ending fight.
- At random times, the right-side margins for a paragraph will move and there is no way to fix it in Off Perm 365 (Word or PPT). I have discovered that if I copy that paragraph and paste just the text (not the keeping or merging the old formatting) into a blank word document on your desktop version of Word, and then copy that text back into the Off Perm 365 doc, that usually fixes it.

Ops Report Editing Notes

- Be consistent.
- All bullets, headers, pic descriptions... need a Security classification: (U), (SBU)
- Paragraph title should be bold.
- Paragraph titles should be capitalized.
- Paragraph title ends with a period and not a colon.
- 2 spaces between sentences.
- Use 12 font Times New Roman for the Ops Report and Calibri 16 or 18 for the S-Slides.
- GEC vs "the GEC." When it is used as an adjective, e.g. "GEC partner XYZ" we don't add the "the". But used as a noun it takes a "the", e.g. "The GEC worked with XYZ"
- Month (spelled out) - Day - no year. August 2.
- Do not refer to threat or functional teams. GEC not GEC/xx team.
- U.S. not US or USG.
- Hizballah not Hezbollah.
- (SBU) Use "the Chinese government," "PRC," "Chinese Communist Party (CCP)," or "Beijing" when criticizing negative policies and practices; the generic "China" can continue to be used for positive and neutral references. "Chinese" should only be used in describing specific entities (e.g. "Chinese diplomats" or "Chinese security services") and not actions of the government (e.g., "The Chinese").
- Define Ad Tech campaigns.
 - This campaign used technology to deliver content to microtargeted audiences to conduct audience analysis and.../inform audiences about...
- Pictures need to tell a story. They should also have a description.
- Most paragraphs should include what happens next.
- SE/Gabrielle's direction that: 1) the first line needs to be a Headline, an attention grabber that captures impact and 2) view the slides from S's perspective; don't use language or references that we may know but S. is unlikely to recall immediately. Highlight impact over process.

Best Practices (these are more of my responsibility, but it's good that you are aware of them too.)

Note. Examples are for illustrative purposes only and not necessarily reflective of actual inputs received.

Slides and Ops Report. These are our vehicles to showcase the work of the GEC and the impact we are having to the Secretary and broader interagency community of interest. As we draft them, we should keep that fundamental goal in mind.

Start with a Headline. The first bullet of a slide should strive to capture the impact or so-what of the slide. It should aim to capture the reader's attention to encourage him/her to read further. As an example: A slide should not/not start with something like: "GEC funded a report regarding abuses by IRGC." An alternative opening would be: "GEC sponsored program rattles Iranian regime by generating domestic discourse critical of IRGC." Notice how the word choice changes the sentence from conveying just the fact that we funded a report to conveying the impact and so-what of the GEC initiative.

Showcase GEC Leadership/Involvement. Word choice should showcase GEC thought leadership and program involvement to the extent possible (and accurate...don't embellish, stay factual). Note other partners in the building if a collaborative effort. As an example, instead of: "GEC partner ASPI released report on WeChat and Tiktok censorship," consider this framing: "GEC research initiative conducted by ASPI exposes reach of PRC censorship by TikTok and WeChat overseas." As another example, instead of: "To extend the reach of the report ASPI is conducting an international roll out campaign to global think tanks and media outlets, as well as to government officials," consider this framing: "To extend the reach of the report, GEC is assisting ASPI with an international roll out campaign to global think tanks and media outlets, as well as to government officials," Note the inclusion of "GEC is assisting" to showcase the role we play in arranging briefings to relevant policy makers and key audiences.

Words to Avoid: Avoid "GEC funded." Use "GEC sponsored...", or "GEC partner xx...", or "GEC research initiative..." The purpose here is to ensure that we don't portray ourselves just as a piggy bank but showcase the thought leadership and/or concept and strategy development that we provided and that underpins the program or activity we are highlighting.

More Words to Avoid: Avoid jargon and technical words. For example, don't use, "received 100 impressions," or "developed a social media scraper." Also avoid acronyms; don't assume the reader has the level of fluency you do, spell things out.

Include a Takeaway in the Description. When highlighting a discrete program or activity, include a takeaway or bottom line of the program so the reader gets a sense of what the value is. Assume the reader isn't going to read the report so we're trying to give a quick tidbit related to the takeaway that would give the reader a sense of why he/she would go to this report. As an example, instead of: "GEC created a new tool to improve analysis of Telegram. The tool fills a critical analytic gap as there is no off-the-shelf commercial software available for this purpose. The tool increased the GEC's ability to analyze the information environment in Belarus during a crisis period."

Instead, consider this framing:

(Title of Slide) "GEC launches new tool to inform action against Disinformation.

(First bullet) GEC in house-developed social media analysis tool reveals Russia disinformation themes surrounding Belarus elections.

(Second bullet) It suggests that Russian messaging is promoting that Lukashenko legitimately won the election; the West is assisting the opposition for nefarious reasons; and that Russia created the first COVID-19 vaccine.

(Third bullet) These analyses are being shared with the interagency and foreign partners to inform policymakers about ongoing situation in Belarus."

This second framing highlights the GEC's role/leadership, includes a brief snapshot of the analysis (gives the reader a sense of why he/she would go to this report), and concludes by highlighting that our actions are providing a value add by supporting relevant policy makers and the broader community of interest.

Highlight Key Upcoming Initiatives When Appropriate. If a partner will launch an initiative the following week that is of direct policy interest, consider including a slide on it. We need to use judgment here because not all programs warrant a pre-flag. Some are just steady-state programs consistent with our mission. But if the program directly relates to a topic that has seventh floor attention or is under active policy discussion or is in the media (or is a large event that will have a media splash when it launches), we would want to highlight that to demonstrate GEC thought leadership on the issue or to flag that a program or a piece of analysis is forthcoming that is directly germane to a policy issue at play. A good example of this is the WeChat/Tiktok report by ASPI. We previewed this in the S slides because we knew it had seventh floor attention and was under active policy discussion.

Use Different Thresholds for S Slides and Ops Report. It is okay and expected that the Ops Report that goes to the interagency will have more content in it than the S Slides. The S slides should include only those issues that rise to the threshold of briefing to S. There is no set threshold; we have to use our judgment. We've done a good job of this thus far so I would recommend that you all continue to use the same judgment you have so far. S is the primary customer for the slides. However, we will also provide the slides to USDP (outcome of SE Gabrielle's meeting with USDP last week).

Sender: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Recipient: (b)(6)h@alutiiq.com>;
(b)(6)@alutiiq.com (b)(6)@alutiiq.com>;
(b)(6)@alutiiq.com (b)(6)@alutiiq.com>



(U) Global Engagement Center Operations Update

November 13, 2020

(U) GEC Russia Report Continues to Have an Impact

(U) GEC's Russian Pillars of Disinformation Report Featured in Leading UK Newspaper

- (U) UK-based newspaper *The Times* ran a front-page article on the British government's cyberwar against anti-vaccine Russian propaganda, citing the GEC's "Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem" report and highlighted three Russian proxy sites mentioned in the Pillars report: SouthFront, News Front, and Geopolitica.ru.
 - (U) The author of the article, Lucy Fisher, promoted the article and the Pillars Report in tweets, which included a link to the report.



(U) The GEC Announces Election-Related Assistance to Ecuador

(U) At the November 10 U.S. - Ecuador Bilateral Expanded Political Dialogue, Special Envoy Lea Gabrielle announced the GEC would provide training to the Ecuadorians in preparation for their upcoming elections.

- (U) The GEC will conduct training on its collaborative analytics platform GEC-IQ, as well as on disinformation and propaganda for Ecuadorian government communicators and analysts. These training events are scheduled to take place before the end of the year.
- (U) Ecuador has previously been the victim of coordinated disinformation campaigns, most recently surrounding its response to COVID-19. The GEC's assistance will help enable free and fair elections while blunting the impact that disinformation and adversarial propaganda may have on the electoral outcome.



(U) GEC Launches Game to Reduce Disinformation's Effectiveness

(U) The GEC and DHS's online counter disinformation game, Harmony Square, was reviewed positively in the *Harvard Misinformation Review*.

- (U) Within four days of the November 6 research announcement by the *Harvard Misinformation Review*, the game gained over 23,000 players. The game has received extensive media coverage with over 60 articles resulting from Harvard's review and an earlier press release from Cambridge University.
- (U) The peer-reviewed research found that the game increased psychological resistance against manipulation techniques commonly used in political misinformation. The game functions as a psychological "vaccine" by exposing people to weakened doses of the common techniques used in political misinformation.
- (U) The GEC will conduct an international rollout in the coming weeks and DHS is finalizing its preparations for a domestic rollout.
- (U) GEC introduced DHS to the game concept during a GEC Tech Demo in 2019. As a result, GEC and DHS partnered with the game developer DROG to develop what eventually became Harmony Square.



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"UNCLASSIFIED"

3/31/2025

Approved: R/GEC: Special Envoy, Lea Gabrielle

Drafted: R/GEC: (b)(6)

Cleared:

P :	(b)(6)	(ok)
D:		(ok)
R:		(ok)
S/P:	(b)(6)	(ok)
GPA:		(ok)
EUR/RUS:	(b)(6)	(ok)
EUR/PPD:		(ok)
CGRCU:	(b)(6)	(ok)
WHA/PSA:	(b)(6)	(ok)

(U) GEC Weekly Operational Report

11/6/2020

Colleagues,

(U) Ongoing GEC Activities to Expose Propaganda and Disinformation.

(U) Countering Russian Disinformation.

- ~~(SBU)~~ **GEC Video Shows Europeans the Power of Disinformation.** The final video from GEC's Tactical Communications Initiative (TCI) to counter COVID-19 disinformation in Europe reached over 1.7 million people.
 - ~~(SBU)~~ The video showed how easy it is for adversaries to create a disinformation narrative and how quickly it can spread (full video [here](#)).
 - (SBU) The video mocked the narratives developed by our adversaries in an effort to inoculate viewers against similar techniques.
 - (U) The video gained 1.7 million impressions on YouTube with an average view-through rate of 50.5 percent and an average completion rate of 39 percent, which are well above the advertising industry standard.
 - (SBU) The Campaign focused on Austria, Belgium, Georgia, France, Slovakia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.
 - (U) The U.S. Mission to the EU also tweeted the video; the tweet is the Mission's best-performing tweet ever with 23,000 impressions and 55 retweets.

Barcodes On Shampoo Bottles
Are Messages To Control Our Minds,
Cryptologist Dr Morino Confirms



(SBU) Image from TCI video's mocking disinformation storyline.

- ~~(SBU)~~ **The GEC Successfully Works with the Tech Sector Again to Remove Russian-Sponsored Disinformation.** On October 29, the GEC identified that

SouthFront, a well-known player in Russia's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem and one of the outlets profiled in the Pillars report, had created new Facebook and Instagram accounts following the publication of the Pillars report.

- ~~(SBU)~~ **GEC liaison's to Silicon Valley informed Facebook about the accounts and within 24 hours Facebook removed the accounts.**
- ~~(SBU)~~ Similarly on October 22, the GEC contacted YouTube about a SouthFront page on their platform. YouTube also removed SouthFront's content within 24 hours.
- ~~(SBU)~~ **The GEC Works to Break Maduro's Information Blockade.** The GEC along with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, met with the Venezuela Affairs Unit to discuss Maduro's information blockade in the run-up to Venezuela's December 6 elections.
 - ~~(SBU)~~ The goal is to identify the regime's censorship and monitoring technologies and practices, suitable circumvention technologies and online access options, and how best to improve Venezuelans' unfettered access to the internet and information.
 - ~~(SBU)~~ The GEC will use an artificial intelligence-driven technology to assess censorship practices in Venezuela and identify opportunities where technological capabilities can be leveraged to evade detection. As vulnerabilities in the regime's censorship infrastructure are identified, tools designed to leverage these specific capabilities can be deployed.

(U) Countering Iranian Disinformation.

- ~~(SBU)~~ **A GEC Partner's Report Exposes Iranian Misinformation around COVID-19.** GEC's partner produces a weekly online report—*Lies, Misinformation, and Makeshift Graves: a Chronology of Coronavirus in Iran*, providing the latest information on Iranian mishandling of the pandemic. The report gives an account of the coronavirus outbreak in Iran, and how the government dealt with the unfolding crisis, starting with reports of the first cases to the escalation of illness across the country—a situation the government failed to control for a range of reasons.
 - (U) Media outlets, politicians, and public figures often turn to this regularly updated chronology, which is integral to the GEC effort to keep a spotlight on Iran regime-related public health disinformation.
 - (U) **Correspondents at the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker*, as well as the UK's UN Permanent Representative, former German Foreign Minister (FM) Fischer, and former Swedish FM Bildt, have cited the report,** and members of the British, Canadian, and Swedish parliaments have said that its contents are widely shared by fellow parliamentarians who are interested in Iran.



(U) Image of Iranian school from the report showing a classroom in the midst of a new COVID-19 breakout in Iran, September 2020.

- **(~~SB~~) GEC Partner Video Exposed Iranian Militia Attempt to Superimpose Its Culture in Syria.** GEC's partner in Syria ran a digital media campaign revealing that Iran is spreading its cultural influence in Syrian society.
 - (~~SB~~) The GEC partner shared videos with local media showing Iran-backed militias opening a governance office and weapons depot in Deir ez-Zor Governorate, as well as renaming streets after Iranian figures, such as Khomeini and deceased Quds Force chief Soleimani.
 - (U) Over 250,000 Syrians saw these videos on local media, which may have led to local protests against rising Iranian influence. Earlier this week, Iranian regime actors were forced to revert the new Iranian street names in Deir ez-Zor, Syria to the original Arabic form.



(U) Image from GEC partner's video showing Iran attempting to rename Syrian streets.

- **(~~SB~~) A GEC Partner-Published Video Reveals Terrorist Acts Committed by Iran and its Proxies Since 1979.** The video highlighted the Islamic Republic's destructive and destabilizing actions in the Middle East, which led to Iran's economic and diplomatic isolation in recent decades. In the two days following publication, over 4,200 people

watched at least 30 seconds of the video on two platforms. **Audience retention was impressive, with 43 percent of the organic YouTube viewers watching the post through to the end, which is well above the advertising industry standard.** 88 percent of viewers were in the 18-34 age bracket, aligning with the intended target audience.



(U) Image from video showing locations of Iranian-sponsored terrorist attacks since 1979.

- **(SBU) GEC Engages Arabic Media via Digital Media Service to Counter Iranian Disinformation and Propaganda.**
 - **(SBU)** The GEC acquired and pushed eight unique video clips to Arabic media the week of October 25 to counter Iranian disinformation and propaganda in the Middle East. **These stories are made available commercially to local and regional news organizations to be incorporated into their news reports.** Some of the video clip topics were:
 - (U) Iranian attempts to influence the U.S. elections.
 - (U) Interdiction of Houthi drug smuggling efforts in Yemen.
 - (U) A massacre allegedly committed by Iran-backed militias in eastern Iraq.
 - (U) Iran's creation of an environment in which ISIS can re-establish itself in Iraq.
 - (U) Hizballah's interference with Syrian citizens attempting to return to their homes in Idlib.
 - **(SBU)** **Nine previously produced video clips appeared 34 times on Arabic network television, including broadcasts by *Al Hadath*, *Al Tagheer*, and *MENA TV*—reaching a broad viewership base in the Middle East.** Arabic-speaking audiences who saw these news broadcasts mostly saw content that highlighted:
 - (U) Iranian attempts to influence the U.S. elections.
 - (U) Interdiction of Houthi drug smuggling efforts in Yemen.
 - (U) Houthi targeting of civilian hospitals in Yemen.
 - (U) The challenges that Iranian influence will present to the Iraqi Army if U.S. forces pull out of Iraq.

(U) Undermining and Exposing Terrorists.

- **(U) The GEC is Participating in the Counter Terrorism Bureau Sync and Counterterrorism Assistance Planning Event.** The purpose of this annual event is "to foster unity of effort, innovation, and learning among interagency planners to create a whole-of-government CT enterprise." This event brings together participants from across State regional and functional bureaus, U.S. Government agencies, implementers, and U.S. embassies in 27 countries for education and program planning.
 - (U) GEC members are participating in a variety of sessions during this annual symposium that runs from October 26 through November 16 that include deep-dives on the Philippines, Indonesia, and Africa as well as general sessions on emerging threats, strategic planning, budget, program monitoring and evaluation, a debrief with Tony Blair, and the upcoming session "What Counter Terrorism Program Success Looks Like."
 - (U) During one of the sessions that has already occurred Chris Miller, Director of the National Counter Terrorism Center, shared his thoughts on U.S. Government CT efforts – in particular he offered that communications and information is the principal domain where the U.S. Government needs to operate and there is room for improvement.

(U) Countering CCP Disinformation.

- **~~(SBU)~~ GEC's Partner and the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) Hold Press Conference Spotighting PRC Disinformation Targeting Taiwan's Democracy.** GEC's partner, the Information Operations Research Group (IORG), hosted a press conference in Taipei on October 20 to unveil its latest research analyzing PRC disinformation networks targeting Taiwan (the second of three reports supported by the GEC). The AIT's spokesperson delivered remarks, and the event was attended by authorities and civil society leaders from Taiwan. IORG's research documents identified PRC-aligned disinformation related to Taiwanese politics, COVID-19, and domestic unrest in the U.S. At the press conference, AIT described IORG's value in documenting evidence of PRC disinformation and its threat to democratic processes, social cohesion, and public trust in government. 23 media outlets, including Voice of America and Radio Free Asia, attended the event, and 18 of them reported on IORG's research. The report is available [here](#) in Chinese with an English-language version coming soon.
- **~~(SBU)~~ GEC Partner Hosts Premier Lusophone Political Conference and Presents Research on PRC Malign Influence.** Catholic University of Portugal's Institute for Political Studies, a GEC partner, hosted the Estoril Political Forum, the Lusophone world's premier political conference, gathering 720 participants, including Portugal's current and former prime ministers and several ambassadors. The conference explored "New Authoritarian Challenges to Liberal Democracy," and GEC's research partners from Catholic University, along with others, presented their ongoing research into PRC economic statecraft and sharp power in Europe. Catholic University will continue to share their findings with policy makers and academics as their research matures. They will conclude their series of papers and public engagements in April 2021.

- **(SBU) The GEC Supports CIJN's Independent Venezuela Coverage.** GEC and WHA support have enabled the Caribbean Investigative Journalism Network (CIJN) to publish a new set of originally researched stories on Venezuela and the ensuing humanitarian crisis caused by its political leaders' failure to adhere to democratic values. These latest stories include vignettes from those suffering from the blunders of the authoritarian regime and address the roles that Russia, China, Iran, and other actors have played in facilitating support for the regime and its failure to address the humanitarian crisis that Venezuelans face daily. The GEC supports CIJN's independent journalism; and therefore CIJN maintains full editorial control over its stories.

(U) Additional Significant GEC Activities.

- **(U) The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Requests the GEC to Present at their Event.** The GEC is the primary author on a paper highlighting organizational capabilities in analysis supporting CPD efforts and will brief the results at two Carnegie events.
 - (U) Using Twitter's information operations dataset, **the GEC's method improves key elements of text-based topic modeling by 94.8 percent.** This is a significant improvement over current analysis of Twitter content.
 - (U) The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Partnership for Countering Influence Operations has requested the GEC participate in two events (November 17 & 24) in their Understanding Information Operations with Twitter Workshop Series.
 - (U) The events are opportunities to present original research seeking to improve how data is analyzed in support of countering disinformation and propaganda.



(U) Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Partnership for Countering Influence Operations graphic.

- **(U) Preliminary Rollout of GEC-Supported Harmony Square Game Slated for November 6 Alongside Harvard-Published Research.** The Harmony Square game is set to go live ahead of a Friday publication from the Harvard Misinformation Review, which highlights Cambridge University research demonstrating the impact and benefits of the game across international audiences.
 - (U) This project uses gamification, the technique of using games as an instructional tool, and will teach people how to recognize and understand disinformation.
 - (U) In coordination with the research publication, Cambridge University will also send out a press release to its network of science and technology stakeholders announcing the game.

- (U) A GEC-organized international launch event for Harmony Square will be held in a few weeks.



(U) Screen shot of Harmony Square game.

- (U) **The GEC's Disinfocloud.com (1154 users) Platform Informs the Interagency and Foreign Government Partners about Technology Capabilities and Assessments of Tools to Counter Propaganda and Disinformation (CPD).** Visit the following links for the latest Disinfo Cloud social media postings on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), the Disinfo Cloud [blog](#), and the Disinfo Cloud [Newsfeed](#). Posts by Disinfo Cloud this week include:
 - (U) As a follow-up to the [March 2019 Weapons of Mass Destruction report](#) and to capture recent updates, Disinfo Cloud is publishing a series of blog posts that: highlight recent foreign state-sponsored disinformation and propaganda efforts, explore how governments and intergovernmental bodies are responding to the challenge, highlight what social media platforms are doing, examine efforts by civil society and independent organizations, and spotlight tools and technologies that can be leveraged to address the threat.
 - (U) The third post on what social media platforms are doing will be published later this week.

(U) GEC Projected Activities.

- (U) **On November 9, the GEC Will Speak at the African Technology Festival Along with Key Technologists from the Region.**
 - (U) As a preparatory event in support of its upcoming U.S.-Africa Tech Challenge, GEC secured a virtual speaking opportunity for GEC Principal Deputy Coordinator (PDC) Daniel Kimmage during an Africa Tech Festival panel.
 - (U) The Africa Tech Festival will draw up to 10,000 tech sector participants from throughout Africa.
 - (U) PDC Kimmage will highlight the U.S.-Africa Tech Challenge and will provide the GEC's perspective on how technology has an impact on disinformation and counter-disinformation efforts, highlighting that private industry can work with the GEC on developing default tools that alert users to disinformation campaigns.



(U) Africa Tech Festival graphic.

(U) Current Observations and Analysis.

- **(SBU) The GEC Released a Report on Iraqi Social Media Discussions About the U.S. Embassy and U.S. Presence in Iraq.** The report indicated that over 56 percent of 3,300 Iraqi tweets discussing this issue since August 2020 were negative towards the U.S. The most influential tweets celebrated the September 2020 discussions of closing the embassy, discussions about how the U.S. might continue to manipulate Iraq if the U.S. Embassy is moved to Erbil, and continued statements that the U.S. force presence is "illegal" following a January 2020 parliamentary vote to expel American troops. Iranian Threat Network groups and pro-Iran politicians have contributed to this discussion, claiming that Iraqi politicians who are complicit in the Embassy being moved to Kurdistan are "traitors."
- **(U) The GEC Releases a Second Report on the Inorganic Amplification of Media Outlet, *The Iran Project*, on Social Media.** On November 2, the GEC produced a report further analyzing the social media presence of *The Iran Project*, an English-language media outlet seemingly based in Qom, Iran.
 - (U) The GEC identified potentially inauthentic amplification of content from the outlet. Accounts sharing *The Iran Project* content at high rates also frequently shared content from Iran's state owned *PressTV* as well as content from Iranian officials and other state media.
 - (U) GEC's initial report on this subject was released on October 16.
 - (U) Note: *The Iran Project* that is the subject of these reports is a distinct entity unrelated to the New York City-based The Iran Project (Foundation for a Civil Society New York).
- **(U) "Killing Anyone Who Insults the Prophet is a Religious Obligation," Says Al-Qaeda (AQ) in a Video Release on October 29 by Pro-Al-Qaeda Media Group Al Bayyinah I'lam.**
 - (U) The video, entitled "Rise, Oh Defender of Muhammad," recounts the story of a Jewish leader and poet named **Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf**, who was killed at the request of the Prophet after he recited poems criticizing him. The video shows an

armed fighter and a caption in English reading: "The time has come to rise up and defend our Prophet. To take revenge. Choose your weapon well. Observe and study your target."

- (SBU) ISIS and AQ media outlets are elevating calls for violence following the publication of several cartoons lampooning the Prophet Muhammad. There is growing concern about reciprocal radicalization, as tit-for-tat violence further amplifies discord throughout France.
- **(U) GEC Briefs on Findings and Methods on Pakistan-based Social Media Teams Report to International Coalition Led by European External Action Service.** On November 3, the GEC briefed an international coalition led by the European External Action Service on its analysis that identified Pakistan-based social media teams that dynamically evolved tactics over several weeks between July and September 2020 to amplify positive messaging related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The briefing focused on the unique analytical methodologies GEC employed to uncover linkages between activity on multiple social media platforms and track how identified network's techniques and tactics evolved over time.
- **(SBU) The GEC Finds that Yevgeniy Prigozhin and PMC Wagner Involvement in Libya Gained Little Coverage on Twitter.** On October 28, the GEC published an analysis of Twitter and Telegram-based conversations surrounding the involvement of Yevgeniy Prigozhin (a prominent Russian businessman who has been sanctioned multiple times) and the Russian private military company (PMC) Wagner, a Russian Ministry of Defense proxy force, in Libya. In general, the GEC found that Prigozhin and PMC Wagner generated relatively low conversation volumes on both Twitter and Telegram, despite the presence of clear pro-Russia narratives. To the extent that conversations around these two entities exist, they generate relatively little broader engagement, reaction, or changes in public sentiment.
- **(U) The GEC Continues to Release its Weekly Update on Global Vaccine Developments.** The GEC's most recent Vaccine Coverage Estimation Model update covered October 22-31. During this time, coverage of U.S. and China's vaccine developments were comparable; however, coverage was more positive towards the U.S. at the end of the period. A major negative article about China's vaccine developments was related to a public dispute between Brazilian President Bolsonaro and the Health Minister regarding Brazil's procurement of 46 million doses of China's CoronaVac vaccine. During the reporting period, global coverage of the United States' and Russia's vaccine developments were comparable. One of the most positive articles about Russia's developments originated from Venezuela and included quotes from President Maduro that expressed confidence in Russia's Sputnik V vaccine as well as stating that all Venezuelans would be vaccinated. The GEC presented their weekly findings during an INDOPACOM disinformation briefing on October 27.

(U) In closing, thank you for your close collaboration with the GEC team. Our success is made possible only by the great colleagues we have in State, the interagency, and our international

partnerships. We will continue to release these reports on a bi-weekly basis. Please contact the GEC's Acting PPO Director (b)(6) at (b)(6)@state.gov if we can be of any assistance.

Best regards,

Leah Bray

Deputy Coordinator for Policy, Plans, and Operations

11/6/2020

Colleagues,

This document is intended to increase understanding about the requirements and process that PPO uses to create GEC weekly Operations Report and S-Slides. This week we were able to use track changes to allow you to see what we did.

I am requesting that teams not only identify which paragraphs they nominate for the Ops Report but also make the first draft of a slide they think should be included in the S-Slides. A draft slide is not necessary if the team doesn't have a topic worthy of S's attention that week; and historically no team has always had a paragraph in the S-Slides.

With that in mind we encourage team directors to continue to streamline and condense their weekly submission to tell us what is worthy of the attention of our partners (distro list). This will reduce the amount of questions coming back to the teams during the short production window and improve the overall quality of the products we build. Finally, it might be helpful for the teams to designate a POC for your input. We will always include team leadership on any questions that PPO has, but if you have a person who pulls all that together for you, it might simplify things for us to ensure they are on the "TO" line too.

I have put the Best Practices section in the back in order to keep focus on this week's results.

(b)(5) Deliberative Process

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(5) Deliberative Process

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(b)(5) Deliberative Process

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
CC: (h)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Fw: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020
Date: Fri, 20 Nov 2020 16:27:36 +0000

(b)(6) here is what I sent to Leah last week

- remove the Fw and update the date in the subject line.
- Just send Leah the Ops Report with this doc, send her the slides in a separate email. That eliminates the chance of her mistakenly sending out the slides with her report.
- have the Ops report attached first (make it easy to find), then add A&R's reports. (b)(6) sent them this morning.
- Check, double check, and triple check all the fonts, spacing, and pic in the email. There are Chinese subversives everywhere!
- When you are getting close (30 min out) send (b)(6) a note so she's looking for it, it goes faster that way.

(b)(6)
From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 8:10 AM
To: Bray, Leah (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (h)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

Leah

Here is the Weekly Operational Report. The S-Sides are through the building and are with R for final approval. Also attached are the referenced A&R reports. I'll send the S-Slides to you in just a minute in a separate email.

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

would you please send this out for Leah using her email. The distro list is below; put me in the TO line and everyone else in the **BCC** line. Please double check (I don't mean to be picky or condescending but OffPerm 365 has screwed me more times than I can count) :

- Remove the FW in the Subject block
- Ensure the attachments are still there
- That the pics in the body of the mail are still there
- That you remove all my admin notes to Leah.

If you have any questions at all I'm teleworking and am on my cell (see sig block), please feel free to call.

(b)(6)

Global Engagement Center
Acting Director, Policy, Plans, and Operations

(b)(6) Cell. (b)(6)@state.gov

Gentleman Adventurer

State, USAID and military addressees.

(b)(6)

(b)(6)





11/13/2020

Colleagues,

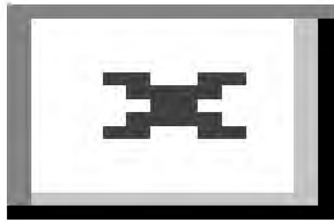
(U) Ongoing GEC Activities to Expose Propaganda and Disinformation.

(U) Countering Russian Disinformation.

- **(U) *Russian Pillars Report* Featured in Leading UK Newspaper.** The UK-based newspaper *The Times* ran a frontpage article on the British government's cyberwar against anti-vaccine Russian propaganda, citing the GEC's *Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem* report and highlighting three proxy sites mentioned in the *Pillars* report: SouthFront, News Front, and Geopolitica.ru.
 - **(U) The author of the article, Lucy Fisher, promoted the article and the *Pillars Report* in tweets, which included in a link to the report.**

Withheld pursuant to exemption

b)(6)



(U) Image from the video depicting COVID-19 infected Shia Pilgrims and militia fighters traveling to Qom, Iran.

(U) Undermining and Exposing Terrorists.

- **(SBU) Pro-ISIS Rocket.Chat Channel Urges Renewed Allegiance for ISIS Emir.** The Counter Extremism Project (CEP), an international non-partisan think tank, identified the post (made initially on October 23), which called on ISIS supporters to renew their pledge of allegiance to Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi. The *Rocket.Chat* channel stated that video and audio pledges to ISIS would be published on Telegram and other platforms to showcase the group's strength.
 - **(SBU) Since the September 17 launch of the GEC lead al-Mawla CONOP, ISIS has increased its requests for online pledges. It is the GEC's assessment that this is an attempt to rebuild lost credibility resulting from the CONOP's release of damaging interrogation reports.**

(U) Countering CCP Disinformation.

- **(U) The GEC Facilitates Coordination between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States on Building Journalism Capacity in the Pacific Islands.** As part of the GEC's efforts to work with America's allies and partners to confront disinformation and propaganda, the GEC facilitated the first meeting between the State Department, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to share information on journalism capacity-building programs across the Pacific Islands.
 - (U) The representatives agreed to develop a framework for de-conflicting activities moving forward. To facilitate that effort, the GEC has generated a catalog of ongoing media support activities conducted by the three countries. This deconfliction effort seeks to maximize the impact and reach of programming by the U.S. and its allies to bolster Pacific Islands media against foreign influence and to avoid over-burdening small media outlets.
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Best regards,
Leah Bray
Deputy Coordinator for Policy, Plans, and Operations

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

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Sender: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Recipient: (b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: (b)(6)@usmc.mil>
Subject: Fw: Debunk EU: Disinformation tsunami against the Baltic states during Belarus protests
Date: Thu, 1 Oct 2020 16:58:26 +0000

Here's the other one. (b)(6)

(b)(6)

USEUCOM J39 Liaison, Russia Team

(Booz Allen Hamilton Contractor)

Global Engagement Center

U.S. Department of State

State SA-5 Desk: 202.634.0594 | Cell: (b)(6)

OpenNet: (b)(6)@state.gov | ClassNet: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov



From: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Sent: Thursday, October 1, 2020 11:14 AM

State and military addressees

To: (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cc: (b)(6)@bah.com>

Subject: Fw: Debunk EU: Disinformation tsunami against the Baltic states during Belarus protests

All: Attached FYI is the latest report from Lithuanian NGO (and GEC partner) Debunk.eu on the flood of disinformation targeting the Baltic states since the start of the protests in Belarus. Best regards, (b)(6)

(b)(6)

USEUCOM J39 Liaison, Russia Team

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From: Viktoras Daukšas | Debunk EU (b)(6)@debunkeu.org>

Sent: Thursday, October 1, 2020 3:36 AM

Subject: Debunk EU: Disinformation tsunami against the Baltic states during Belarus protests

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During the month of August, we have managed to analyse 6500 content pieces throughout all three countries.

The events in Belarus, where people are protesting after the implicit falsification of the results of presidential election, were topical in the media agenda-setting in August. Therefore, it is not surprising that the pro-Kremlin propaganda actively used this topic too. In its own narratives about Belarus, it reserved special places for the Baltic states (especially for Lithuania). The Baltic states, together with other regional countries, were presented as the provokers of the protests.

Read full article:

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About Debunk EU

Debunk EU, Vsl, is an independent technology think tank and non-governmental organisation that researches disinformation and runs educational media literacy campaigns. Debunk EU conducts disinformation analysis in the Baltic states, as well as in the United States and Northern Macedonia together with the partners.

Debunk EU was noticed by such media giants as “The Financial Times” and “Deutsche Welle”. The organisation has presented its activities in 17 countries, including the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Serbia, etc.

Published reports:

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Viktoras Daukšas

Head of Debunk EU

Mob. tel. +(b)(6)

[https://www.linkedin.com/in/\(b\)\(6\)](https://www.linkedin.com/in/(b)(6))

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Recipient: (b)(6)@usmc.mil>

From:	(b)(6)@state.gov>
To:	(b)(6)@state.gov>; GEC-R-EXP <GEC-R-EXP@state.gov>
CC:	(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject:	Fw: Debunk EU: Disinformation tsunami against the Baltic states during Belarus protests
Date:	Thu, 1 Oct 2020 14:41:15 +0000

See below and attached for great report from Debunk EU on disinfo in Baltic states in August 2020.

Best,

(b)(6)

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From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: Oscar De Soto (b)(6)@bah.com>
Subject: Fw: (SBU/FOUO/CIU) GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020
Date: Fri, 13 Nov 2020 17:41:31 +0000

(b)(6)

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(Booz Allen Hamilton Contractor)

Global Engagement Center

U.S. Department of State

State SA-5 Desk: (b)(6) Cell: (b)(6)

OpenNet: (b)(6)@state.gov | ClassNet: midurac@state.sgov.gov



From: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Mix of State and military addressees

Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 12:41 PM

(b)(6)

Subject: Fw: (SBU/FOUO/CIU) GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020

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(b)(6)

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Subject: GEC Weekly Operational Update Report 11.13.2020



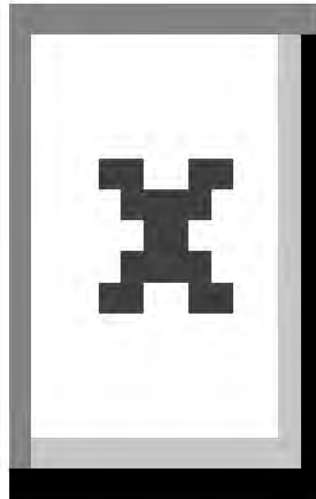
11/13/2020

Colleagues,

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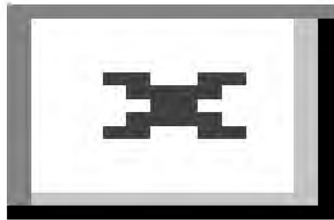
(U) Countering Russian Disinformation.

- **(U) *Russian Pillars Report* Featured in Leading UK Newspaper.** The UK-based newspaper *The Times* ran a frontpage article on the British government's cyberwar against anti-vaccine Russian propaganda, citing the GEC's *Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem* report and highlighting three proxy sites mentioned in the *Pillars* report: SouthFront, News Front, and Geopolitica.ru.
 - **(U) The author of the article, Lucy Fisher, promoted the article and the *Pillars Report* in tweets, which included in a link to the report.**



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- ~~(SBU)~~ **A GEC Partner Exposes Tehran's Laissez-faire Approach to COVID-19.** The two-minute video, produced by a GEC partner and viewable on YouTube, reveals the scale of the epidemic within Iran's borders and highlights the Iranian regime's focus on detaining those accused of spreading "rumors" about the disease rather than working on pandemic mitigation efforts. **The video also showed how militia fighters deployed to Syria, many of whom disregarded health precautions, were spreading the illness. 1,600 of 6,200 YouTube views in the first two days came from people who searched for "Hizballah" in Arabic; 73 percent of those who did that search watched the video.** The video was also published on three other platforms. View COVID-19 video in English [here](#).



(U) Image from the video depicting COVID-19 infected Shia Pilgrims and militia fighters traveling to Qom, Iran.

(U) Undermining and Exposing Terrorists.

- **(SBU) Pro-ISIS Rocket.Chat Channel Urges Renewed Allegiance for ISIS Emir.** The Counter Extremism Project (CEP), an international non-partisan think tank, identified the post (made initially on October 23), which called on ISIS supporters to renew their pledge of allegiance to Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi. The *Rocket.Chat* channel stated that video and audio pledges to ISIS would be published on Telegram and other platforms to showcase the group's strength.
 - **(SBU) Since the September 17 launch of the GEC lead al-Mawla CONOP, ISIS has increased its requests for online pledges. It is the GEC's assessment that this is an attempt to rebuild lost credibility resulting from the CONOP's release of damaging interrogation reports.**

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3/31/2025

Sender: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Recipient: Oscar De Soto (b)(6)@bah.com>

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: GEC Iran <GECIran@state.gov>
Subject: (U) Narratives Analysis
Date: Fri, 6 Nov 2020 20:59:21 +0000

Team,

{SBU} Attached please find (pdf) DT Institute's analysis of regime-affiliated narratives for first two weeks of October, as well as lists of sites monitored. I'd be grateful for experts' evaluations of the quality of DT-I's report and whether it adds to our base of knowledge or is redundant. Was thinking about doing a write-up for disinformation summary (and possible incorporation into Ops Report) but decided to hold off, pending your views of it.

Thanks in advance,

(b)(6) senior adviser, GEC Iran Team, Competitive Innovations LLC Contractor, (b)(6)
(b)(6)

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From: (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
CC: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: For Review: BCL for SE/C Meeting with STAS, EAP, and DRL
Date: Mon, 14 Dec 2020 16:25:39 +0000

Attaching the BCL for your meeting with STAS, Stilwell, and Destro tomorrow.

(b)(6)
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