



**Pekka Kallioniemi** @P\_Kallioniemi

May 4 · 24 tweets · [P\\_Kallioniemi/status/1654061488040992774](#)

In today's [#vatniksoup](#), I'll be talking about the Russian style of online propaganda and disinformation, "Firehose of Falsehood". It's a commonly used Kremlin strategy for Russian information operations, which often prioritizes quantity over quality.

1/23

**The Firehose of Falsehood: the Russian style of propaganda for an age of information abundance.**

- High volume and multi-channel approach
- Shameless in its willingness to broadcast lies
- No commitment to, or requirement for consistency
- Rapid, continuous and repetitive messaging
- Point is not to persuade but to confuse and overwhelm
- Assumes a low trust environment *and lowers it further*
- Number of arguments matters more than their quality
- Drown out competing messages through sheer volume

I have mentioned this particular strategy in many of my previous soups, but have never discussed it in more detail, so here goes. The term was originally coined by Paul & Matthews in their 2016 paper, The Russian "Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model.

2/23

The screenshot displays the RAND website interface. At the top, the RAND logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'About', 'RAND Campaign', 'Press Room', and 'Careers' are on the right. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'RESEARCH', 'LATEST INSIGHTS', 'POLICY EXPERTS', 'CAPABILITIES', and 'GRADUATE SCHOOL'. The main content area features the article title 'The Russian "Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model' with the subtitle 'Why It Might Work and Options to Counter It'. The authors are listed as Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews. Below the title is a small thumbnail image of the document and a 'Read Online' button. To the right of the article is a 'DOWNLOAD FREE ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT' section with a table of download options:

Format	File Size	Notes
PDF file	0.2 MB	Technical Details
Russian language version		
PDF file	0.3 MB	Technical Details
Arabic language version		
PDF file	0.3 MB	Technical Details

Below the table is a 'LESS' button. Underneath the download section, the DOI is listed as 'https://doi.org/10.7249/PE198', along with 'Document Number: FE-198-OSD', 'Year: 2016', and 'Series: Perspectives'. At the bottom right, there is an 'Explore' section with 'Related Topics' including 'Information Operations', 'The Internet', 'North Atlantic Treaty Organization', 'Russia', and 'United States'. The main article image shows a man in a suit speaking at a podium.

They based this name on two distinctive features: 1) high volume, multi-channel approach, and 2) shameless willingness to spread disinformation.

Academic Giorgio Bertolin described Russian disinformation as entertaining, confusing and overwhelming.

3/23



The high volume, multi-channel approach means that these operatives attempt to control the narrative on each major social media platform. Russia has conducted, and is conducting, these operations on Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Telegram, VKontakte, YouTube, and even on Tinder.

4/23



**NV THE NEW VOICE OF UKRAINE** NATION BUSINESS LIFE OPINION

### Russian spies use Tinder to recruit German politicians and military

April 16, 2023, 01:40 PM 575

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Russian spies use Tinder to recruit German politicians and military (Photo: CatSnobby/Twitter)

**Dating app Tinder is widely used by Russian intelligence for spying and recruiting politicians and military in Germany, German newspaper Welt am Sonntag reported on April 15.**



**sky news** 4 May 19°

Home UK Coronation World Politics US Climate **Science & Tech** Business Ents & Arts Travel

### Russian 'smash-and-grab' social media operation on Facebook and Instagram attempting to influence Ukraine war - Meta report

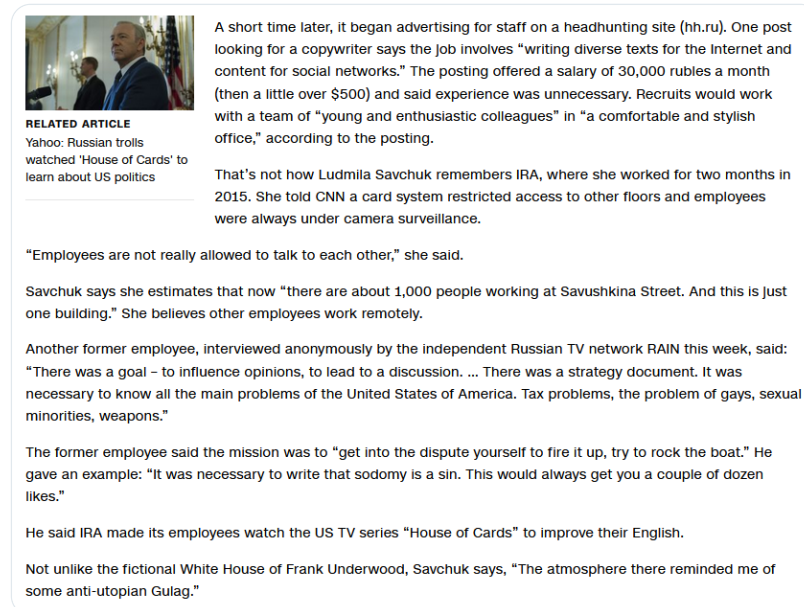
Many fake accounts pushing Russian views on the invasion have been blocked, while Meta has also limited the reach of state controlled media. Independent researchers welcome the changes but say disinformation from other sources is left "virtually unchecked".


**Sanya Burgess**  
Digital investigations journalist @sanyaburgess

Thursday 23 February 2023 13:04, UK

The volume of these operations shouldn't be underestimated: already back in 2015, more than 1000 paid trolls worked at Yevgeny Prigozhin's Internet Research Agency (IRA), the most well-known troll farm in Russia, and each commentator had a daily quota of 100 comments.

5/23





**RELATED ARTICLE**  
Yahoo: Russian trolls watched 'House of Cards' to learn about US politics

A short time later, it began advertising for staff on a headhunting site (hh.ru). One post looking for a copywriter says the job involves "writing diverse texts for the Internet and content for social networks." The posting offered a salary of 30,000 rubles a month (then a little over \$500) and said experience was unnecessary. Recruits would work with a team of "young and enthusiastic colleagues" in "a comfortable and stylish office," according to the posting.

That's not how Ludmila Savchuk remembers IRA, where she worked for two months in 2015. She told CNN a card system restricted access to other floors and employees were always under camera surveillance.

"Employees are not really allowed to talk to each other," she said.

Savchuk says she estimates that now "there are about 1,000 people working at Savushkina Street. And this is just one building." She believes other employees work remotely.

Another former employee, interviewed anonymously by the independent Russian TV network RAIN this week, said: "There was a goal - to influence opinions, to lead to a discussion. ... There was a strategy document. It was necessary to know all the main problems of the United States of America. Tax problems, the problem of gays, sexual minorities, weapons."

The former employee said the mission was to "get into the dispute yourself to fire it up, try to rock the boat." He gave an example: "It was necessary to write that sodomy is a sin. This would always get you a couple of dozen likes."

He said IRA made its employees watch the US TV series "House of Cards" to improve their English.

Not unlike the fictional White House of Frank Underwood, Savchuk says, "The atmosphere there reminded me of some anti-utopian Gulag."



These numbers have probably gone up a LOT since then, and many more countries are using troll farms to conduct political campaigns or to spread propaganda.

One of the most famous case of social manipulation was the social media influencing around the Khashoggi murder.

6/23

We also identified a long list of international actors apparently benefiting from the publicity generated by the same manipulation providers.

- Head of a Saudi government agency (Twitter).
- Advisor to the Saudi Royal Court (Twitter).
- A Lebanese journalist (Twitter).
- A number of accounts associated with the National Council of Resistance of Iran (Twitter).
- A prominent Venezuelan politician (Twitter).
- Various accounts from public figures in Indonesia, Egypt, Brazil (Twitter).
- A member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (TikTok).
- A Turkish mayor (YouTube).
- A Ukrainian deputy mayor (YouTube).
- An Indian computer science professor (YouTube).
- A member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council (YouTube).
- A Nigerian firebrand pastor (YouTube).
- One dentist, a health guru, a number of medical clinics (YouTube).
- The director of a Ukrainian pet food business (Facebook).
- A former Ukrainian president (Facebook).
- A former Ukrainian government minister (Facebook).
- A member of the Italian senate (Facebook).

MEDITERRANEAN POLITICS  
2021, VOL. 26, NO. 2, 247-259  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2019.1697089>

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group

 Check for updates

### Framing a murder: Twitter influencers and the Jamal Khashoggi incident

Alexei Abrahams<sup>a</sup> and Andrew Leber<sup>b</sup>

\*Open Technology Fund Research Fellow at Citizen Lab, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada; <sup>b</sup>Department of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA

**ABSTRACT**

Social media have played a significant role in political discourse across the Mediterranean in recent years. In this research note, we showcase the usefulness of social media data for political analysis by focusing on the main Arabic Twitter hashtag following the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul, October 2018. We collect a sample of almost 2.4 million tweets posted by nearly 370,000 Twitter accounts. We show that just 281 accounts drove 80% of the discourse, and that these accounts can be reliably clustered into separate ideological camps representing different social forces of Egyptian, Turkish, European, and Gulf origin, arrayed against or in support of Saudi Arabia's regional agenda.

**KEYWORDS** Social media; Polarization; Community Detection; Process Tracing; Mixed Methods

These trolls would work in shifts, and the work goes on daily around the clock. A better description of these sweatshops would be troll factories, since they have turned trolling into an assembly line of propaganda and disinformation.

7/23



The high volume is accompanied with the willingness to spread disinformation. Russia often utilizes the "throwing shit at the wall to see what sticks" strategy, pushing out hundreds of contradicting and false narratives, only to see if some of them starts gaining traction.

8/23

TCH ALL PUBLICATIONS THE BEST ON YOUTUBE TSN EXCLUSIVE UKRAINE POLITICS **WAR** GLAMOR PROSPORT LADY HEALTH

TCH > War

## Novel Military Tool: Russia Issued a Statement about Research of "Combat Insects" and "Combat Bats" in Ukraine that Allegedly Will Be Used against Invaders (Video)

 Vira Hmelnioka 19:34, 28.10.22 2 min

Share:      



Photo: Getty Images

Some examples of forgotten narratives include Zelenskyy leaving Kyiv after the invasion started, secret NATO base in Mariupol, Poles trying to blow up a chlorine tank, birds as bioweapons, combat mosquitos, the use of dirty bomb, and Ukrainian Satan worshipping.

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ANALYTICS

## Combat mosquitoes, a dirty bomb and Zelenskyy's escape. Top 10 most absurd fakes invented by the Russian propaganda

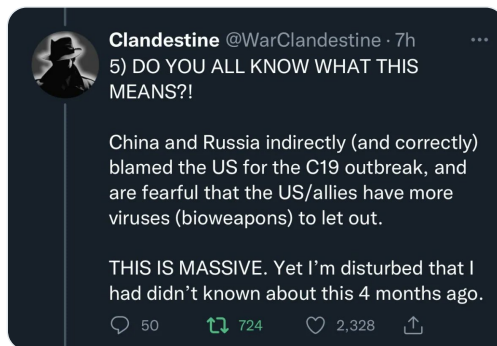
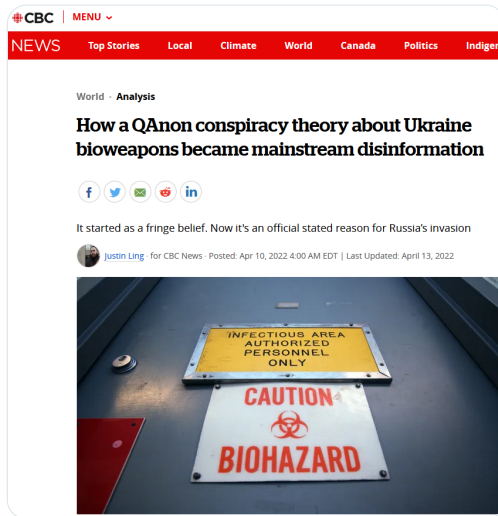
09.01.2023



The cartoon depicts a mosquito dressed as a soldier, wearing a green helmet with an American flag patch, sunglasses, and brown combat boots. The mosquito is holding a rifle in its right hand and a handgun in its left. It is using its proboscis to inject a man who is cowering on the ground. The man has a balding head and is wearing a dark suit. The mosquito's abdomen is a large green sac with a skull and crossbones symbol, indicating it is a bioweapon. The wings have a blue and white star emblem. The text 'COMBAT MOSQUITOES' is written in the background. The artist's signature 'ALSO MEN' is visible in the bottom right corner.

Troll farms also often "borrow" ideas and narratives from conspiracy theorists. One example of this was the "bioweapons lab" theory started by a QAnon follower, Jacob Creech. The narrative was spread, along with the Kremlin, by people like Tucker Carlson and Steve Bannon.

10/23



There is also no commitment to any kind of consistency and these narratives can naturally be contradictory - as I mentioned, the goal is not to persuade but to confuse and overwhelm.

11/23

A lot of the "argumentation" from these trolls focuses on anecdotal evidence or faked sources. A good example of this are the "Ukrainian Nazis" replies that flood the discussion with anecdotal image collages of Ukrainians waving Nazi flags or having Nazi tattoos.

12/23

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REUTERS FACT CHECK JUNE 30, 2022 / 8:53 PM / UPDATED 10 MONTHS AGO

## Fact Check-Photo of man with Nazi tattoos does not show Ukrainian prisoner of war

By Reuters Fact Check 3 MIN READ  

An image of a military officer examining a young man with Nazi tattoos has been shared online in June 2022 with a message falsely saying it shows a Ukrainian prisoner of war in Donetsk, Ukraine. The photograph was taken in Belarus in June 2005.

Users shared screenshots of a now-deleted tweet that read: "Another laotian buddhist monk - ukrop Pow is being treated in Donetsk."

Examples of the claim shared online can be viewed ([here](#)), ([here](#)), ([here](#)), and ([here](#)).

The image is not recent, however, nor was it taken in Ukraine.

A reverse image search reveals that the image is viewable on Getty Images, captioned: "MOGILYEV, BELARUS: A Belarus prison doctor examines a prisoner covered with Nazi tattoos at the 15th prison in the town of Mogilyev, some 200 kms from Minsk, 22 June 2005. Some 4000 prisoners were released according to the amnesty granted for the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII and some 5,000 will be released within one year. AFP PHOTO / VIKTOR DRACHEV ([here](#)).



The firehose also often utilizes non-sourced and out-of-context materials. Using (fake) imagery is an effective way to invoke strong reactions and emotions. Sometimes Russia produces false flag videos, but have done them less after various videos were geolocated to Russia.

13/23

**DAILY BEAST**

ALL CHEATSHEET OBSESSED POLITICS CRIME ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA INNOVATION OPINION **WORLD** U.S. NEWS S

RUSSIA


## *Russia Caught Red-Handed Making Fake Video of Ukrainian Attack on Woman and Child*

**NICE TRY**

Russia's latest dubious evidence of Nazis was unmasked as a clumsy fake by one of the propaganda outlets that first spread it.

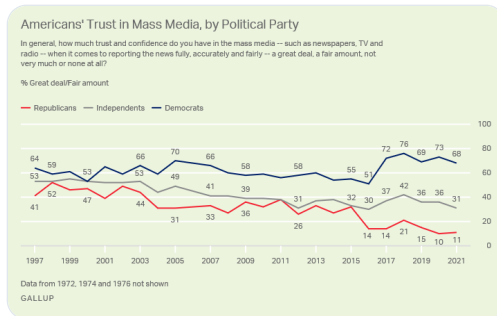
Allison Quinn  
News Editor | Updated Mar. 28, 2023 9:14AM ET / Published Mar. 28, 2023 9:13AM ET

f t e

A photograph showing a person in a military-style uniform standing next to a dark SUV with a white cross on the back, in a wooded area. The person is wearing a helmet and a dark jacket, and is holding a rifle. The SUV is parked on a dirt road, and there are bare trees in the background. The sky is overcast.

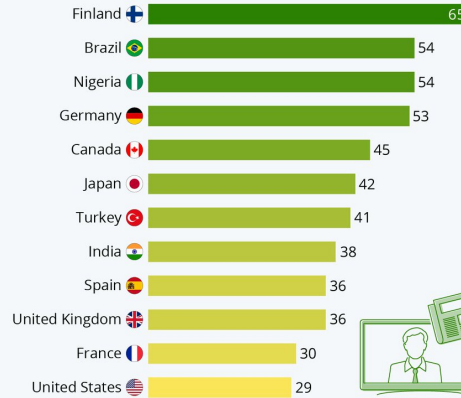
This strategy works extremely well in so-called low trust environments, meaning countries or societies where the trust against politicians, journalists and authorities is relatively low. Naturally, the effective use of this method degrades this trust even further.

14/23



## Where Trust In The News Is Highest & Lowest

% agreeing "you can trust news most of the time" in selected countries in 2021\*



\* Research was conducted online by YouGov in January & February 2021. 2,000 respondents in each market.  
Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report



The sheer number of messages and comments drown out any competing arguments or viewpoints, and this also often makes any kind of fact-checking obsolete - after the information has been debunked, the topic has already changed many, many times.

15/23

## #UkraineFacts

By the International Fact-checking Network Signatories

Developed by Maldita.es

**ENES**

Min: 0 Max: 717

This map shows where disinformation about Ukraine's invasion has circulated and has been debunked by IFCN Signatories. Countries in shades of red represent the amount of disinformation that has been identified and debunked by national fact-checkers in each country.

When you click on a piece of disinformation, countries in which that hoax has circulated highlight in blue and you can access each country's disinformation in its language below.

When you click on a country you can see which disinformation has been identified and fact-checked in that country and access the national fact-checker's website in their language.

Feel free to embed this map in your webpage <https://this.link>

### DEBUNKED DISINFORMATION : 2966 FACT-CHECKS

Click on any of these items

The video shows NATO's military vehicles delivered from America to Europe for the war in Ukraine: they belong to a US combat brigade stationed in Poland. They will not be delivered to Ukraine but are on their way back to the US.

Invalid Date

Public display of Ukrainian flags is prohibited by law in Israel. Otherwise, the fine is 10,000 Israeli shekels: the bill of similar content was not presented, and the Knesset, the Israeli legislative body, did not adopt the law of similar content.

Invalid Date

The photo allegedly shows the Leopard tank captured by Russians in Bakhmut; this photo is fabricated, and the actual photo has been circulating on websites since at least 2006.

Invalid Date

Zelenskyy allegedly said American sons and daughters will be obliged to fight and die for their country in the video; Zelenskyy said that if Ukraine lost the war, Russia could invade a NATO country.

Invalid Date

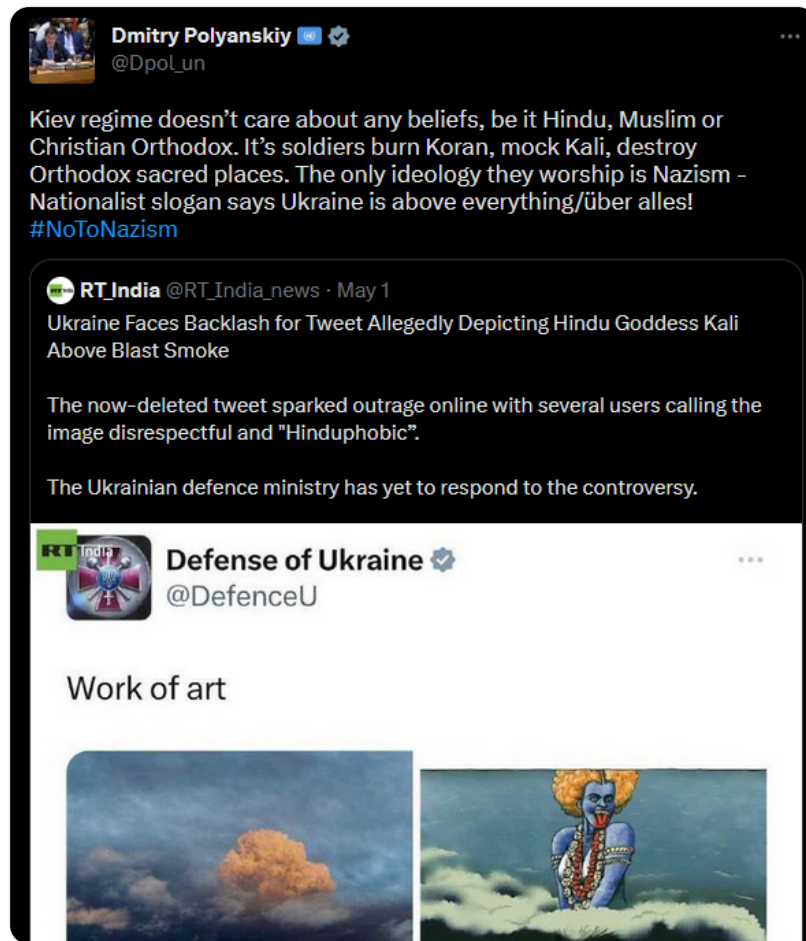
And this is exactly why #NAFO has been so efficient against this particular strategy: it counters the strategy with similar measures. High volume, nonsensical replies from braindead cartoon dogs...

16/23



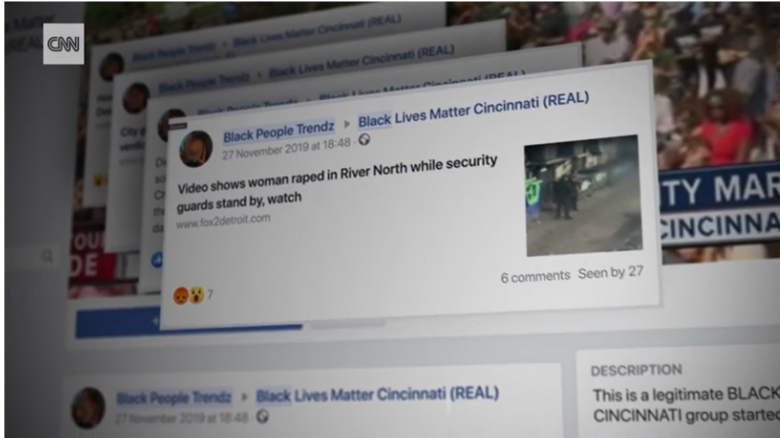
...shuts down the firehose of falsehood extremely well, and as a bonus ridicules the main sources of pro-Russian narratives, including the country's ex-president, the embassy and diplomat accounts.

17/23



Like with most production, propaganda has been outsourced to cheaper sources. These days many of these troll farms have been moved from places like Russia and Macedonia into various African countries, including Nigeria and Ghana.

18/23



**Black People Trendz** > **Black Lives Matter Cincinnati (REAL)**  
27 November 2019 at 18:48  
Video shows woman raped in River North while security guards stand by, watch  
www.fox2detroit.com  
6 comments · Seen by 27

DESCRIPTION  
This is a legitimate BLACK CINCINNATI group started

### Inside a Russian troll factory in Ghana

Working with researchers from Clemson University, CNN has found a Russian troll operation targeting American voters and, for the first time, we have confronted the people on the ground behind it -- and it's not where you might expect. With help from Facebook and Twitter, who had already been investigating some of these accounts and who corroborated our findings - this is a never-before seen look at how Russia is once again trying to influence America's democracy. CNN's Clarissa Ward reports.

07:30 - Source: [CNN](#)

China has utilized the firehose in their own propaganda, and their most famous troll farm is the 50 Cent Army. The biggest difference between Russian and Chinese operations was that the Chinese focused on national networks, mostly neglecting the online world outside of China. 19/23



**The Register**  
SECURITY  
This article is more than 1 year old  
**When it comes to hacking societies, Russia remains the master at sowing discord and disinformation online**  
China can't hold a candle to GRU's shenanigans, says expert  
Shawn Nichols in San Francisco  
Thu 6 Aug 2020 - 21:48 UTC

**BLACK HAT** While China is the *balbe notre du jour* of the US government, Russia is the master of spreading disinformation, sowing conflict, and derailing discourse online, the Black Hat security conference was told today.

At her Thursday keynote, Stanford Internet Observatory's research manager Renee DiResta explained how Russian military intelligence -- the GRU -- and the private Internet Research Agency (IRA) were putting the likes of China to shame. Security companies and government agencies have good reason to move their focus from Beijing to Moscow, she warned.

The basic methods of hacking public opinion are fairly simple, DiResta explained. Fake accounts generate content and spam it out on social media to amplify the message. If enough real people pick up and the posts go viral the mainstream media kicks in and amplifies the desired message still further.

In Russia's case, it spreads divisive material, stolen information, and fake news in an attempt to turn Americans against each other, sour civil society, sow doubt, and create distractions, leaving people unsure of what's really going on. This worked. In China's case, it tried to make people like China. This didn't work.



**VOA**  
October 01, 2007 8:20 AM  
Joyce Lau  
**Who Are the Chinese Trolls of the '50 Cent Army'?**

FILE - Customers surf the Internet at an Internet cafe in Beijing, China.

Russia also focuses more on bashing and blaming others, whereas China focuses on praising the CCP. After realizing the success of Russia in their info ops, though, China has also started using more aggressive strategies against their rivals, especially against the US.

20/23

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TEA LEAF NATION

## Meet the Chinese Trolls Pumping Out 488 Million Fake Social Media Posts

New research exposes a "massive secretive operation" to fill China's internet with propaganda.

By David Werline





Based on BBC, Russian and Chinese propaganda accounts are "thriving" on Twitter after [@elonmusk](#) sacked the team that was countering them. Allegedly the current system relies fully on automated detection systems.

21/23



The image is a screenshot of a BBC News article. At the top, the BBC logo is on the left, followed by a 'Sign in' button and navigation links for 'Home', 'News', 'Sport', 'Reel', and 'Worklife'. Below this is a red banner with the word 'NEWS' in white. Underneath the banner is a secondary navigation bar with links for 'Home', 'War in Ukraine', 'Coronation', 'Climate', 'Video', 'World', 'UK', 'Business', 'Tech', and 'Science'. The 'Tech' link is underlined. The main headline of the article is 'Twitter staff cuts leave Russian trolls unchecked' in a large, bold, black font. Below the headline, it says '14 April'. There is a red share icon and a grey box containing the text 'Social media regulation debate'. The main image of the article is a large black silhouette of the Twitter bird logo mounted on a brick wall. A 'REUTERS' watermark is visible in the bottom left corner of the image.

@DarrenLinville, an associate professor from Clemson University said that one of these networks appears to originate from IRA. They have also identified troll farm from the opposite camp, with tweets supporting Ukraine and Alexei Navalny.

22/23

Now, a new group of Russian trolls is active on Twitter.

It supports Putin's war in Ukraine, ridicules Kyiv and the West, and attacks independent Russian-language publications, including the BBC Russian Service. Many of these trolls' accounts have been suspended, but dozens are still active.

Darren Linvill, associate professor at the Clemson University Media Forensics Hub in South Carolina, says the network appears to originate from Prigozhin's troll factory.

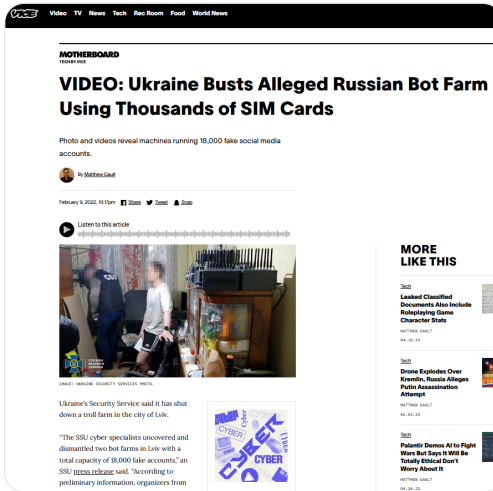
Mr Linvill and his colleagues have also discovered two similar Russian-language troll networks, but from an opposite camp. One tweets in support of Ukraine, and another promotes Russian opposition, including the jailed Putin critic Alexey Navalny.

While they have all the markings of troll accounts, including random numbers in the Twitter handles and coordinated behaviour, these networks appear to remain undetected by the platform.

The Clemson University team is also tracking pro-Chinese accounts targeting users in both Chinese and English about issues of importance to the Chinese government.

With only a skeleton crew remaining, Twitter does not have resources to swiftly detect, attribute and take down this foreign propaganda, according to former employees.

While the platform also established partnerships with research institutions that detected information operations, scholars say they have not heard anything from Twitter since November.



Before Musk took over the site, Twitter was relatively effective in removing troll farm accounts, but one can only assume that this is not the case anymore.

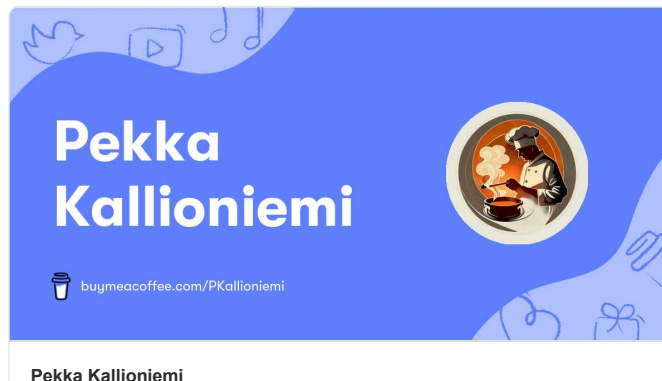
As is tradition, social media giants prioritize profits over safety.

23/23

	2020	2021
Facebook	96.53%	98.52%
Twitter	74.23%	83.43%
Instagram	91.80%	96.01%
TikTok	99.69%	84.77%
Vkontakte		99.96%
YouTube	97.17%	92.38%

Table 2: Percentage of inauthentic activity remaining on the platforms after four weeks.

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<https://buymeacoffee.com/PKallioniemi>

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Russian propaganda themes:

**Pekka Kallioniemi**  
@P\_Kallioniemi · Follow

In today's #vatnik soup I'll discuss Russia's disinformation and propaganda campaigning in more detail, and go through four of the main "big" themes around which most of their propaganda is based on.

1/13

### Russia & Iran Are Facebook's Top Sources Of Disinformation

Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior networks removed by Facebook by country of origin (2017-2020)\*

Country	Number of Networks
Russia	27
Iran	23
Myanmar	9
United States	9
Ukraine	8

\* CIB - networks of coordinated fake activity and disinformation.  
Source: Facebook

statista

7:43 PM · Jan 7, 2023

2.4K ❤️ Reply Copy link

[Read 53 replies](#)

Russian narratives:

**Pekka Kallioniemi**  
@P\_Kallioniemi · Follow

In today's #vatniksoup and another edition of "You pronounced this nonsense, not me", I'll go through some of the most common pro-Russian claims and tropes. I have discussed these in previous soups, but I feel like this type of general collection would be a helpful resource.

1/23



12:23 PM · Mar 10, 2023



3.2K Reply Copy link

Read 66 replies

Social media manipulation:



**Pekka Kallioniemi**  
@P\_Kallioniemi · Follow



In today's #vatnik soup I'll continue talking about troll farms and social media manipulation, extending the topic to other social media platforms, too.

Our social media space is constantly manipulated by paid actors whose goal is to control the online narratives.

1/10



7:44 AM · Dec 20, 2022



1.1K Reply Copy link

Read 33 replies

Troll farms:



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In today's #vatnik soup, I'll continue discussing about info ops, disinfo & propaganda. Today's focus will be on troll farms and "useful idiots".

As usual, I'll focus on Russia and its activities because of its topicality and the previous research available.

1/13



7:22 AM · Dec 9, 2022



♥ 1K    💬 Reply    🔗 Copy link

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...