

Kenya's political hashtag trends analysis

The investigation takes an in-depth look at some of the politically aligned trends between May and June 2021.



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Glossary

Detailed descriptions and explanations of terms and abbreviations relevant to this report are listed below. These serve to clarify how such abbreviations and terms are used in our report and are not intended to be authoritative.

Abbreviation	Description
ANCIR	African Network of Centres for Investigative Reporting
CAR	Central African Republic
CfA	Code for Africa

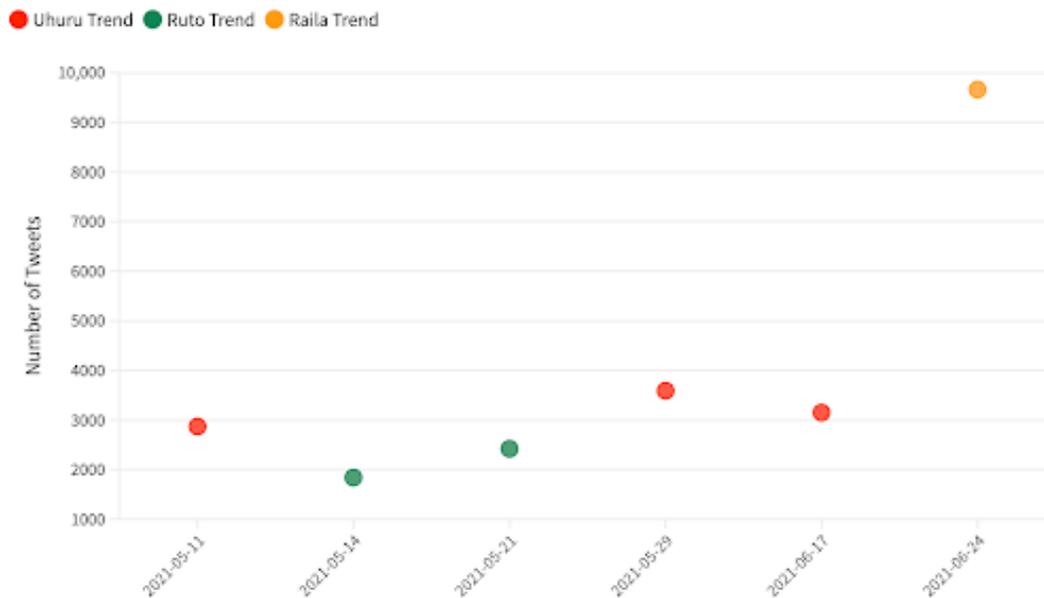
Executive Summary

Kenya's political hashtag trends analysis: The investigation takes an in-depth look at some of the politically aligned trends between May and June 2021.

Between May and June 2021, the iLAB identified six out of 510 hashtags naming the three major players in Kenya; Uhuru Kenyatta, Raila Odinga and William Ruto. These included; #UhuruEducationReforms, #DPRutoLeaveWaruguruAlone, #WhyRutoStoppedBBI, #AFishForUhuru, #HowRutoSabotagedUhuru and #RailaMeansBusiness.

TRENDING HASHTAGS IN KENYA (POLITICS)

Collected hashtags mentioning Raila Odinga, Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto.



Source: iLAB's Hashtag Monitor, 2021



Sample deleted polarising tweet (Source : Meltwater/ CFA)

An analysis of the six hashtags revealed a number of key actors who were central in the amplification of politically-aligned trends targeted at key politicians in the country.

The hashtags focused on key issues and real world events as shown below:

1. #UhuruEducationReforms trended on 10 May 2021, after Kenya's President, Uhuru Kenyatta received results of the 2020 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education(KCPE) examinations ahead of its release to the public. The hashtag was aimed at amplifying the efforts made by Uhuru's government to reform the country's education sector. Most of the tweets discussed and shared images, videos and content that showcased the projects undertaken by the president, all over the country. The accounts @Queen_Maureen1 and @IrakiCess were among the top 10 influencers within the network.

2. #DPRutoLeaveWaruguruAlone trended on 14 May 2021 and was targeted at deputy president William Ruto, amplifying a narrative claiming that the Laikipia women representative, Cate Waruguru had been attacked by politicians and supporters of Ruto. The accounts @Tabbykanyungu and @ragz2beechez were among the top 10 influencers within the network.
3. #WhyRutoStoppedBBI trended on 13 May 2021, after a five-judge bench in Kenya's supreme court made a ruling against a government-backed plan to make fundamental changes to the country's constitution. Kenya's Deputy President Ruto, who also has plans to run for presidency in the August 2022 presidential elections, had opposed this initiative labelled, the BBI initiative. We observed a division on the sentiment of the ruling from the users who used the hashtag, with some supportive of the decision, while others being critical of the decision. The accounts @Chemutai254 and @ragz2beechez were among the top 10 influencers within the network.
4. #AFishForUhuru trended on 29 May 2021 after president Uhuru Kenyatta's visited Kisumu for the Madaraka day celebrations, scheduled for 1 June 2021. Majority of the users expressed their appreciation for Kisumu being considered as a venue for Madaraka day celebrations which translates to being included in real development discussions. Key influencers under this hashtag had been previously identified in our investigations, including @Disembe and @itsmutai. @Queen_Maureen1, the key amplifier for hashtags #UhuruEducationReforms, was also identified to be among the top 10 influencers within the network.
5. #HowRutoSabotagedUhuru trended on 17 Jun 2021 and was aimed at the deputy president William Ruto, who was allegedly sabotaging Uhuru Kenyatta because of starting his campaigns early, yet the elections are still almost a year away. Most of the claims within the hashtag were critical of Ruto, mentioning that he was the stumbling block in Uhuru's administration. Some of the posts were also supportive of Ruto.
6. #RailaMeansBusiness trended on 24 June 2021 and was the hashtag with the highest level of engagement. It was started by Raila Odinga's personal Twitter account and immediately amplified, making the hashtag one of the trending topics in the country. This was subsequently amplified by a network of influential accounts including @EngnrDan and @OmwandhoVickery.

The Authors

Code for Africa (CfA) is the continent's largest network of non-profit independent civic technology and open data laboratories, with teams of full-time technologists and analysts in 13 African countries. CfA's laboratories build digital democracy solutions that give citizens unfettered access to actionable information to improve citizens' ability to make informed decisions, and to strengthen civic engagement for improved public governance and accountability.

The African Network of Centres for Investigative Reporting (ANCIR) is a CfA initiative that brings together the continent's best investigative newsrooms, ranging from large traditional mainstream media to smaller specialist units. ANCIR member newsrooms investigate crooked politicians, organised crime and big business. The iLAB is ANCIR's in-house digital forensic team of data scientists and investigative specialists who spearhead investigations that individual newsrooms are unable to tackle on their own. This includes forensic analysis of suspected digital disinformation campaigns aimed at misleading citizens or triggering social discord or polarisation using hate speech or radicalisation or other techniques.

The iLAB subscribes to CfA's guiding principles:

1. **We show what's possible.** Digital democracy can be expensive. We seek to be a catalyst by lowering the political risk of experimentation by creating successful proofs-of-concept for liberating civic data, for building enabling technologies and for pioneering sustainable revenue models. We also seek to lower the financial costs for technology experimentation by creating and managing 'shared' backbone civic technology and by availing resources for rapid innovation.
2. **We empower citizens.** Empowering citizens is central to our theory of change. Strong democracies rely on engaged citizens who have actionable information and easy-to-use channels for making their will known. We therefore work primarily with citizen organisations and civic watchdogs, including the media. We also support government and social enterprises to develop their capacity to meaningfully respond to citizens and to effectively collaborate with citizens.
3. **We are action oriented.** African societies are asymmetric. The balance of power rests with governments and corporate institutions, at the expense of citizens. Citizens are treated as passive recipients of consultation or services. We seek to change this by focusing on actionable data and action-orientated tools that give 'agency' to citizens.
4. **We operate in public.** We promote openness in our work and in the work of our partners. All of our digital tools are open source and all our information is open data. We actively encourage documentation, sharing, collaboration, and reuse of both our own tools, programmes, and processes, as well as those of partners.
5. **We help build ecosystems.** We actively marshal resources to support the growth of a pan-African ecosystem of civic technologists. Whenever possible we reuse existing tools, standards and platforms, encouraging integration and extension. We operate as a pan-African federation of organisations who are active members of a global community, leveraging each other's knowledge and resources, because all of our work is better if we are all connected.

This report was authored by the iLAB's East African team, consisting of investigative manager **Allan Cheboi**, data analyst **Jean Githae** and data technologist **Robin Kiplangat**. The report was edited by senior programme manager **Amanda Strydom** and deputy CEO **Chris Roper**, and approved for publication by CEO **Justin Arenstein**.



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The context

Between May and June 2021, Kenya's political environment was rife with conversations of the tense situation between President Uhuru Kenyatta and Deputy President William Ruto. The once close association between the two has dwindled over the last three years, in the aftermath of 'the handshake' in March 2018, when President Kenyatta and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga agreed to unite to maintain peace and stability in the country.

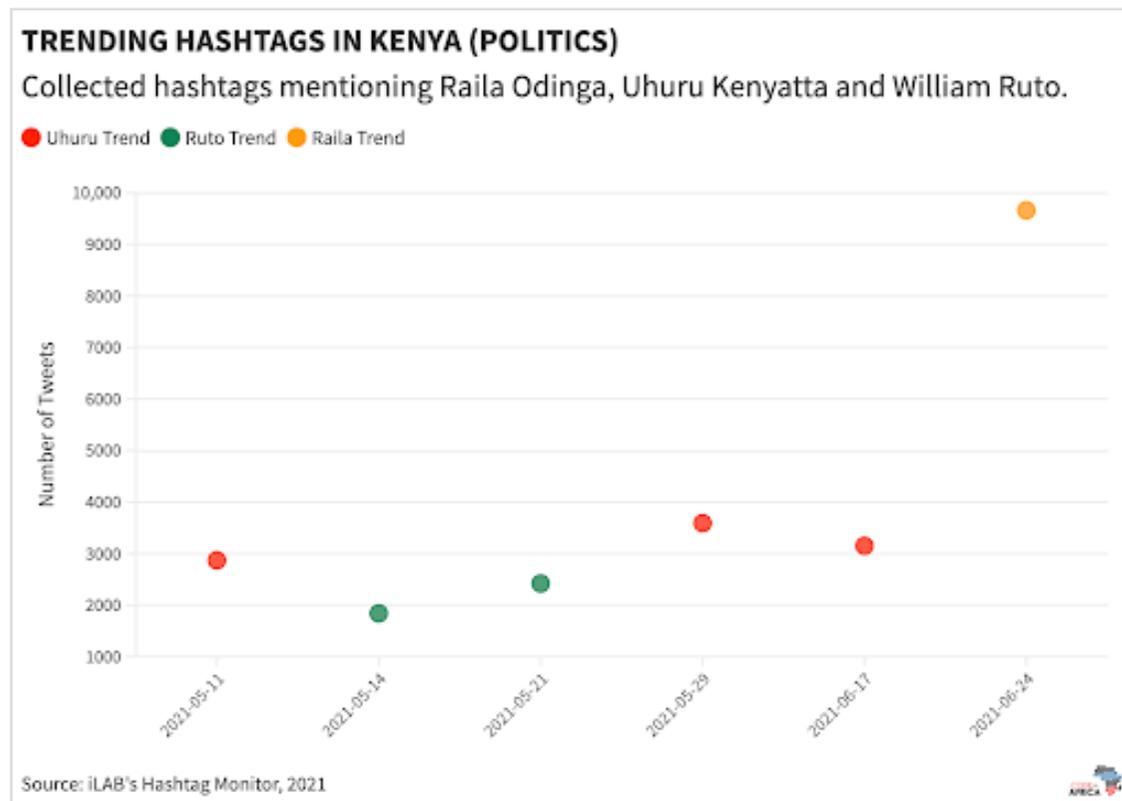
The handshake led to the [Building Bridges Initiative Report](#) which proposed a set of constitutional reforms, including more constituencies and a hybrid system of government with a president and prime minister. The deputy president has been vocal in his [opposition to](#) certain clauses of the report, particularly on the expansion of the executive.

The iLAB conducted an investigation into identified politically aligned trends between May and June 2021. We identified six hashtags naming the three major players in Kenya; Uhuru Kenyatta, Raila Odinga and William Ruto. The aim was to understand how each of the individuals was mentioned including mapping key actors and reach of the social media mentions.

The Network

In April 2021, CFA developed a Twitter hashtag **monitoring** tool that was aimed at collecting daily trending hashtags on Twitter, to enable us map interesting trends and identify Twitter trends manipulation efforts in Kenya.

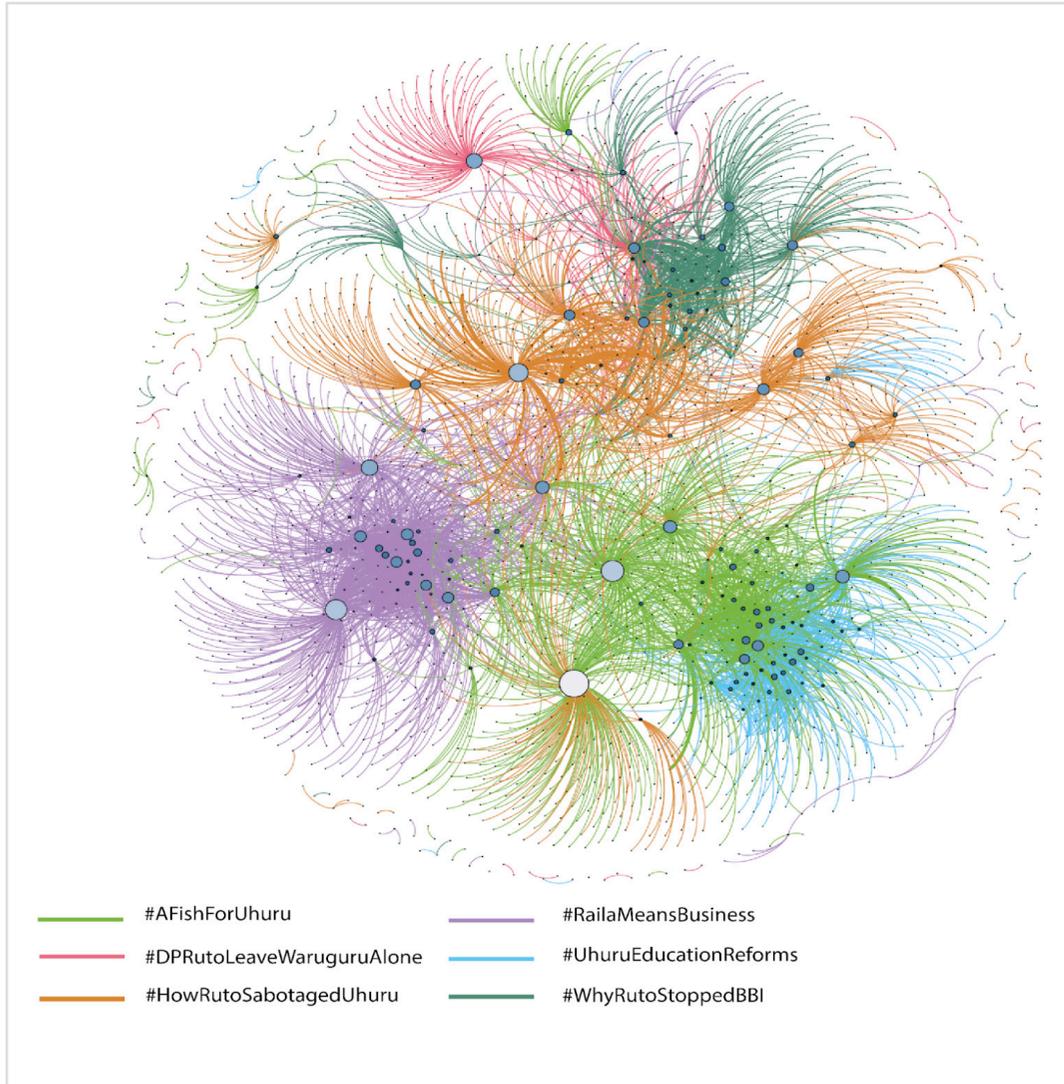
Between 1 May 2021 and 31 Jun 2021, the tool collected 510 hashtags. Six of these hashtags mentioned the three major players in Kenya's political scene; Uhuru Kenyatta, Raila Odinga and William Ruto. These included; #UhuruEducationReforms, #DPRutoLeaveWaruguruAlone, #WhyRutoStoppedBBI, #AFishForUhuru, #HowRutoSabotagedUhuru and #RailaMeansBusiness.



Trending hashtags in the month of May 2021 (Source: Hashtag Monitor/ CFA)

Although only one trend was of a conversation about Odinga, the hashtag #RailaMeansBusiness garnered the highest number of interactions.

A network visualisation of the six hashtags shows a number of key actors who were central in the amplification of several of the hashtags including those discussing different politicians.



Combined visualisation for the six hashtags (Source: gephi/CfA)

The Hashtags

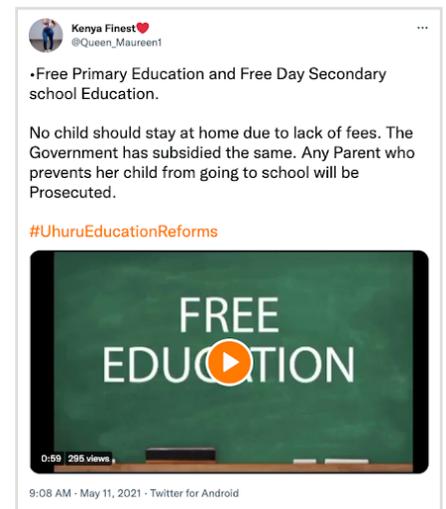
#UhuruEducationReforms

On 10 May 2021, Kenya's President, Uhuru Kenyatta received results of the 2020 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education(KCPE) examinations ahead of its release to the public. At the same event, Uhuru **witnessed the swearing** in of Prof Fatuma Chege as the Principal Secretary of the new State Department for Implementation of Curriculum Reforms within the Ministry of Education. The hashtag was aimed at amplifying the efforts made by Uhuru's government to reform the country's education sector.

The **tweet** that started the campaign was posted at 8 A M by user @masaah_. The campaign quickly gained traction within the first hour garnering a total of 583 tweets. As at the end of the day, the hashtag had garnered a total of 2,870 tweets.

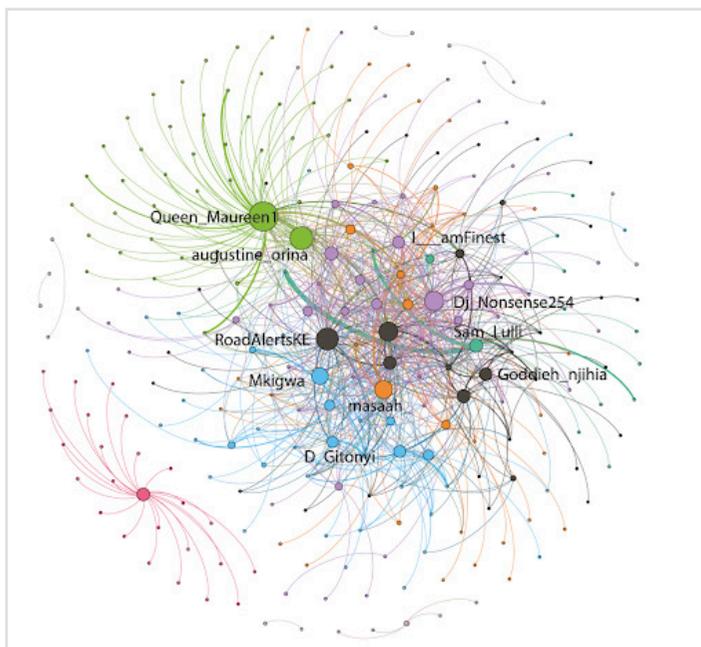
However, 67% of the were tweets categorised as retweets or quoted tweets while 33% were original tweets.

Most of the tweets discussed and shared images, videos and content that showcased the projects undertaken by the president, all over the country.



Most retweeted posts using the hashtag #UhuruEducationReforms (left : @augustine_orina,Right:@Queen_Maureen1) (Source: Twitter/ CfA)

The most active accounts and the most retweeted accounts are listed in the table below. The top 10 most active accounts retweeted posts across the five hashtags. The accounts @Queen_Maureen1 and @IrakiCess were among the top 10 influencers within the network. Having been retweeted 99 and 60 times, respectively.



Network analysis of accounts that retweeted using the hashtag #UhuruEducationReforms (Source: CfA via Gephi)

The accounts listed below had the most interaction rates on Twitter for each cluster.

Top 10 Twitter profiles with the most interaction rates in the network

	Account	Number of Retweets	Account creation date	Following	Followers
1	Queen_Maureen1	99	2020-04-07	43,611	3,993
2	IrakiCess	60	2016-05-23	9,694	10,546
3	masaah	58	2013-09-01	7,009	7,010
4	Dj_Nonsense254	57	2020-01-17	53,208	7,862
5	augustine_orina	55	2014-04-16	12,167	10,282
6	RoadAlertsKE	53	2013-11-06	193,954	913
7	Sam_Lulli	52	2012-08-16	74,394	28,155
8	MKigwa	42	2013-03-24	9,565	6,382
9	KarembokaNax	39	2018-08-12	40,344	32,149
10	NancyKimani92	38	2020-06-03	1,407	1,667

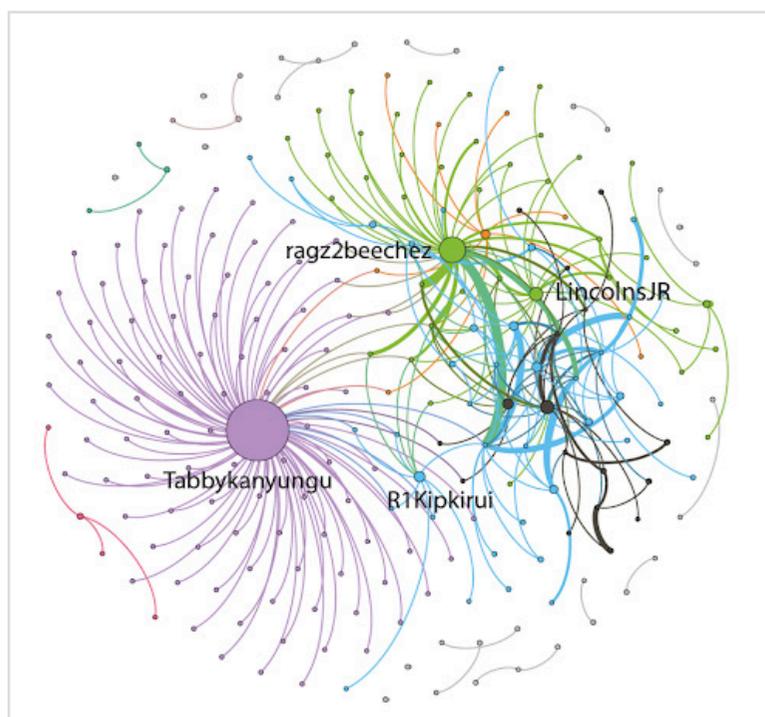
Account information of the most retweeted accounts in #UhuruEducationReforms cluster (Source: CfA via Twitter)

#DPRutoLeaveWaruguruAlone - may 14 2021

The hashtag was targeted at deputy president William Ruto, amplifying a narrative claiming that the Laikipia women representative, Cate Waruguru had been attacked by politicians and supporters of Ruto. The trend was started by a **tweet** from user @janetcherotich, calling for Ruto to stop sponsoring attacks against Waruguru.



The earliest posts using the hashtag #DPRutoLeaveWaruguruAlone (Source: Twitter/CfA)



Network analysis of accounts that retweeted using the hashtag #DPRutoLeaveWaruguruAlone (Source: CfA via Gephi)

The trend resulted in a total of 1,840 tweets. The accounts @Tabbykanyungu and @ragz2beechez were among the top 10 influencers within the network. Having been retweeted 103 and 65 times, respectively.

The accounts listed below had the most interaction rates on Twitter for each cluster.

	Account	Number of Retweets	Account creation date	Following	Followers
1	Tabbykanyungu	103	24 Jul 2015	2,622	10,299
2	ragz2beechez	65	31 May 2011	10,173	9,762
3	Mokeira_254	20	2 Apr 2020	6,533	1,920
4	LincolnsJR	18	4 Mar 2020	5,753	5,122
5	njikafelix	15	24 Jul 2017	7,688	4,772
6	Nairobi_bae	13	1 Dec 2019	23,944	239
7	courtynephilip	12	16 May 2015	53,222	26,350
8	Lynne_Soi	11	16 May 2019	11,583	10,687
9	R1Kipkirui	11	24 Oct 2013	1,818	3,612
10	pkmwaura420	8	23 Aug 2015	1,976	1,706

Account information of the most retweeted accounts in #DPRutoLeaveWaruguruAlone cluster (Source: CFA via Twitter)

#WhyRutoStoppedBBI

On 13 May 2021, a five-judge bench in Kenya's supreme court made a ruling against a government-backed plan to make fundamental changes to the country's constitution. Kenya's Deputy President Ruto, who also has plans to run for presidency in the August 2022 presidential elections, had opposed this initiative labelled, the BBI initiative. His **tweet** reacting to the court ruling which nullified the entire BBI process as illegal, just a few days after the National Assembly and the Senate had approved it sparked an online debate on the topic.

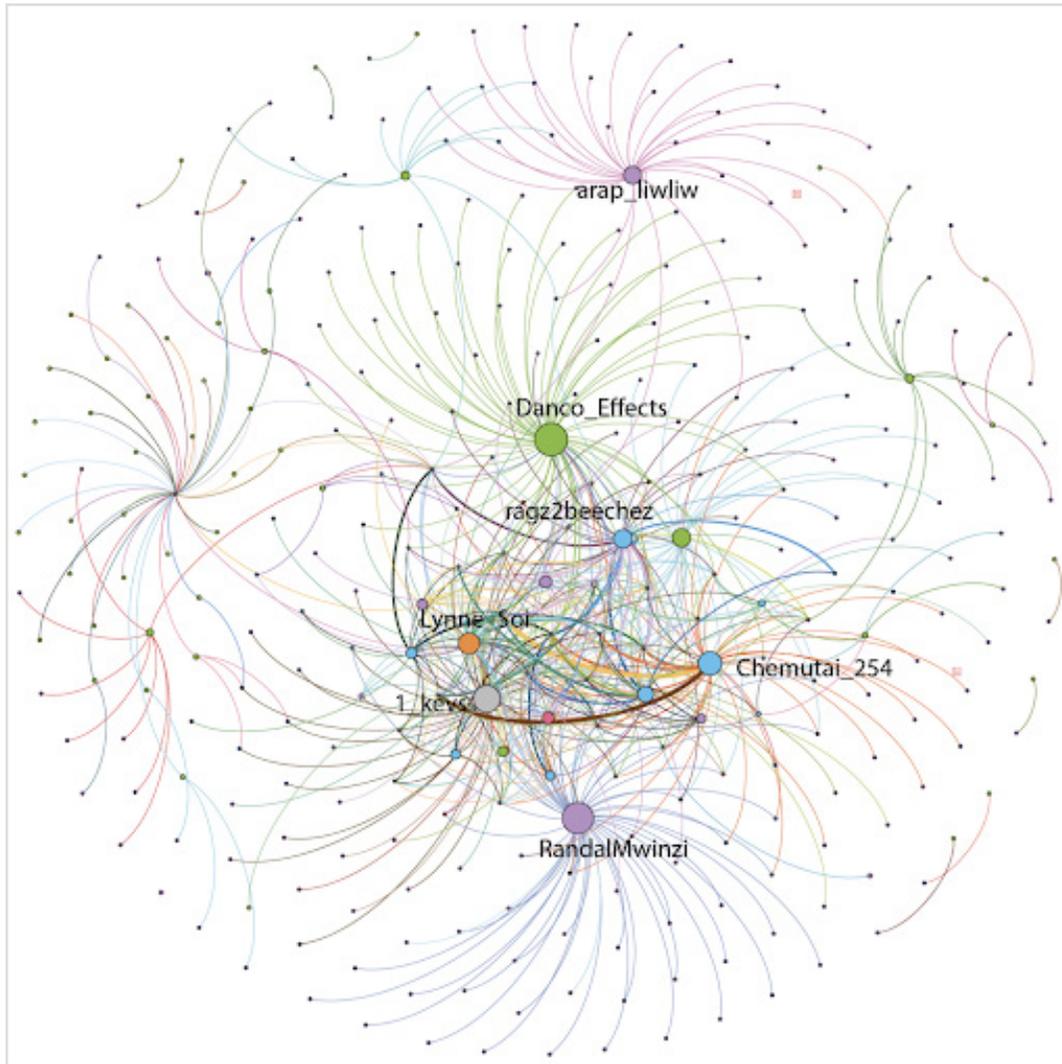


A copy of the tweet from William Ruto's on the BBI ruling (Source Twitter/ CFA)

We observed a division on the sentiment of the ruling from the users who used the hashtag, with some supportive of the decision, while others being critical of the decision.



The earliest Accounts that shared posts on the #WhyRutoStoppedBBI Campaign (Source CFA/Twitter)



Network analysis of accounts that retweeted using the hashtag #WhyRutoStoppedBBI (Source: CfA via Gephi)

The trend resulted in a total of 1,840 tweets. The accounts @Chemutai254 and @ragz2beechez were among the top 10 influencers within the network. Having been retweeted 83 and 79 times, respectively.

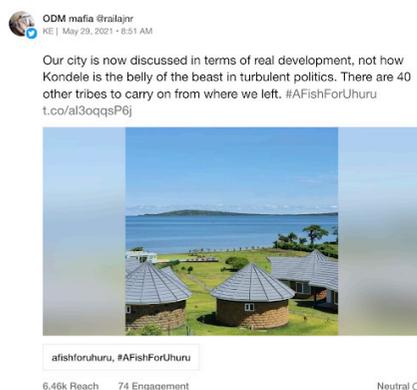
The accounts listed below had the most interaction rates on Twitter for each cluster.

	Account	Number of Retweets	Account creation date	Following	Followers
1	Chemutai_254	83	11 Jan 2020	11,915	1,606
2	ragz2beechez	79	31 May 2011	10,173	9,762
3	Lynne_Soi	72	16 May 2019	11,583	10,687
4	Danco_Effects	71	31 Mar 2014	5,062	5,546
5	RandalMwinzi	59	20 Jul 2018	18,725	18,104
6	1_kevs	59	12 Feb 2017	10,384	9,968
7	Lawrence_barasa	54	20 Jul 2011	1,434	806
8	Mukunyii	31	1 Jan 2019	1,716	1,358
9	arap_liwliw	30	24 Oct 2019	1,097	202
10	KipkemoiKoech__	26	7 Sep 2019	4,074	1,226

Account information of the most retweeted accounts in #WhyRutoStoppedBBI cluster (Source: CFA via Twitter)

#AFishForUhuru

The trend was as a result of president Uhuru Kenyatta's visit to Kisumu for the Madaraka day celebrations, scheduled for 1 June 2021. The first tweet which kickstarted the discussion under this hashtag was posted by user @railajnr, who expressed his appreciation for Kisumu being considered as a venue for Madaraka day celebrations which translates to being included in real development discussions.



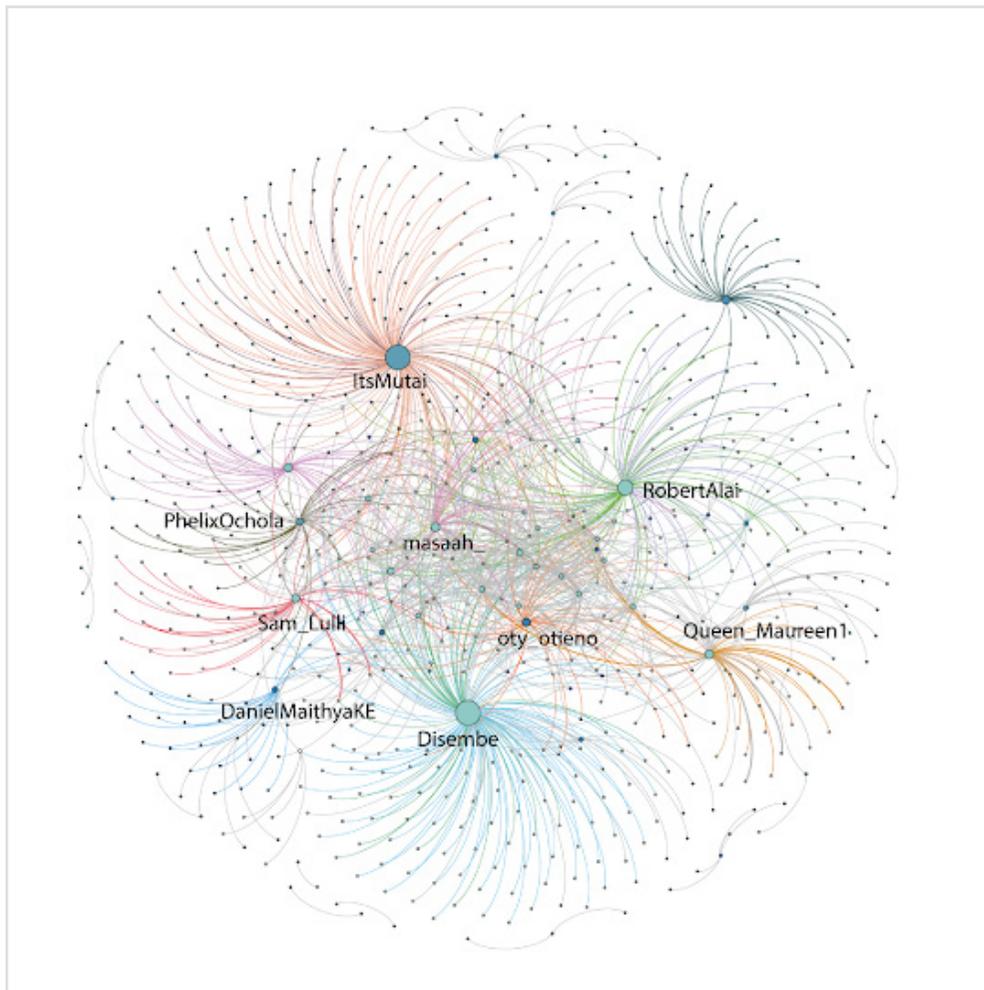
First tweet using #AFishFor Uhuru (Source: [Twitter](#), CFA)

The hashtag subsequently resulted in 3,590 tweets with key influencers previously identified in our investigations @Disembe and @itsmutai, amplifying the narrative.



Sample tweets using the hashtag #AFishForUhuru (left, centre, right) (Source: Twitter/ CfA)

The account @Queen_Maureen1, the key amplifier for hashtags #UhuruEducationReforms, was also identified to be among the top 10 influencers within the network.



Network analysis of accounts that retweeted using the hashtag #AFishForUhuru (Source: CfA via Gephi)

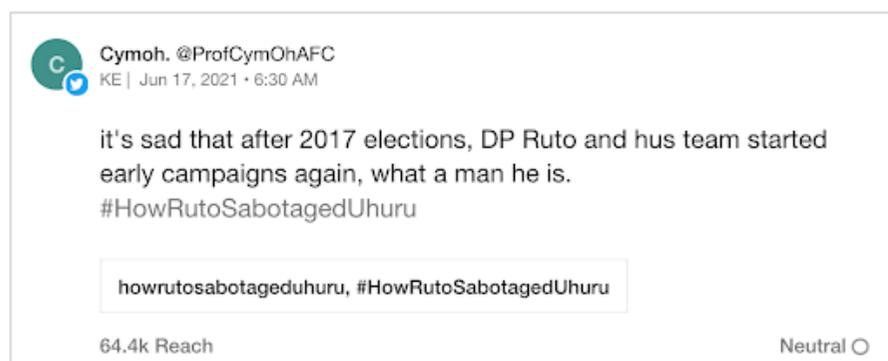
The accounts listed below had the most interaction rates on Twitter for each cluster.

	Account	Number of Retweets	Account creation date	Following	Followers
1	Disembe	164	3 Jul 2012	321,880	625
2	ItsMutai	160	24 Jun 2012	452,260	117,094
3	RobertAlai	94	12 Oct 2008	1,784,049	3,751
4	Queen_Maureen1	75	7 Apr 2020	43,611	3,993
5	masaah_	62	1 Sep 2013	7,009	7,010
6	Sam_Lulli	54	16 Aug 2012	74,394	28,155
7	I___amFinest	39	18 May 2019	21,475	4,477
8	Colloidal_	37	28 Nov 2019	30,057	23,278
9	oty_otieno	37	5 Mar 2013	1,529	2,358
10	NelsonHavi	36	27 Aug 2015	767,375	199

Account information of the most retweeted accounts in #AFishForUhuru cluster (Source: CFA via Twitter)

#HowRutoSabotagedUhuru

The campaign was kickstarted by a tweet from user @ProfCymOhAFC, on 17 Jun 2021, as early as 6:30AM in the morning. The trend was aimed at the deputy president William Ruto, who was allegedly sabotaging Uhuru Kenyatta because of starting his campaigns early, yet the elections are still almost a year away.



This led to an immediate spike in the trend with most of the claims critical of Ruto, mentioning that he was the stumbling block in Uhuru's administration. Some of the posts were also supportive of Ruto.

KENNETH @IkeOjuok
NG | Jun 17, 2021 • 7:18 AM

Immediately after the handshake on March 9th 2018, WSR began a campaign to alienate UK from Jubilee strongholds and now his foot soldiers like Kabando wa Kabando are using the strategy to further the agenda through claims that UK has abandoned his people. #HowRutoSabotagedUhuru

howrutosabotageduhuru, #HowRutoSabotagedUhuru

109k Reach 387 Engagement Neutral

G DELLY @gdelly3
Jun 17, 2021 • 9:44 AM

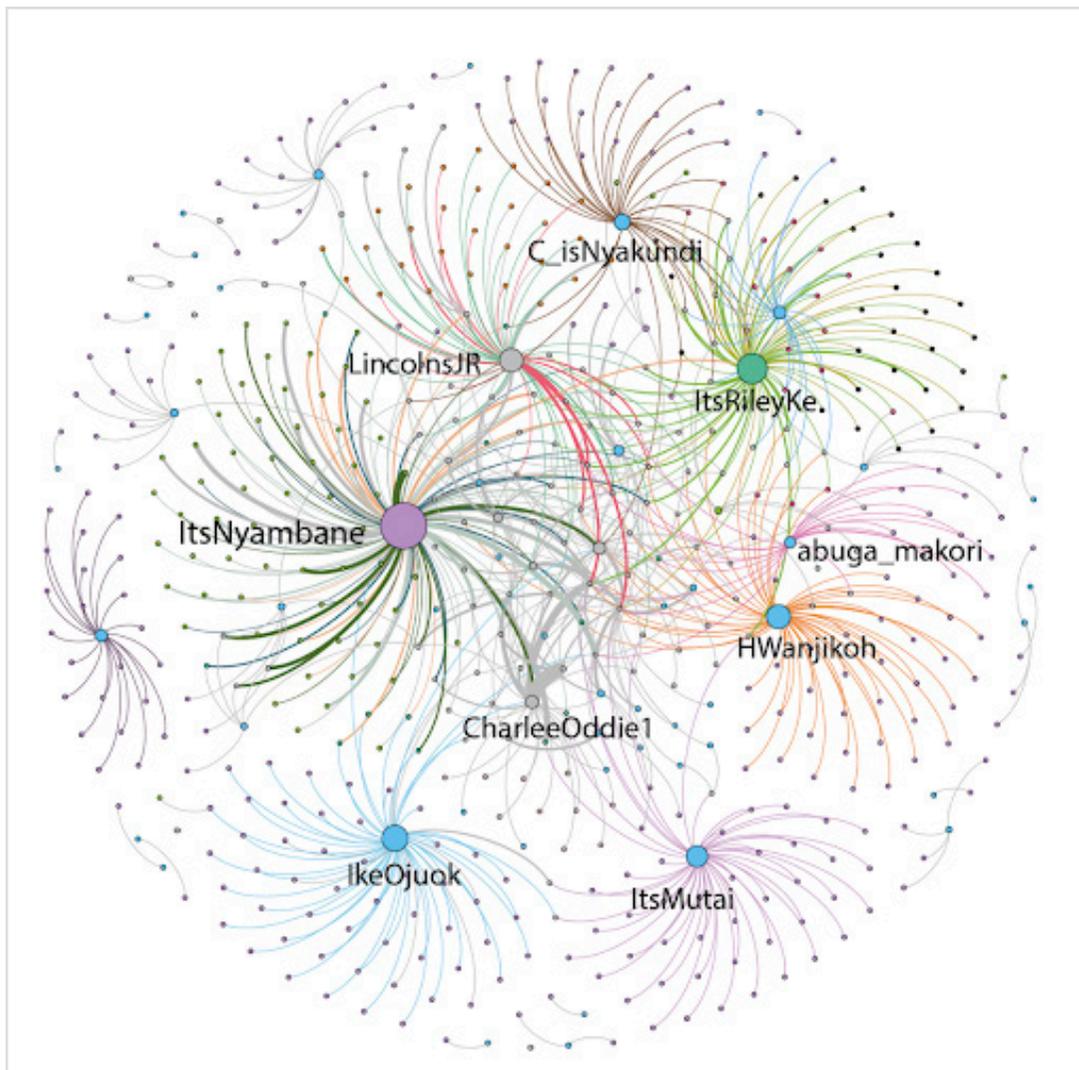
If you love his politics give him a like ❤️
#HowRutoSabotagedUhuru "Kabando" "Kanairo" t.co/euDQiznX37



howrutosabotageduhuru, #HowRutoSabotagedUhuru

89 Reach 791 Engagement Neutral

Sample tweets using the hashtag #HowRutoSabotagedUhuru (Source: Twitter/ CfA)



Network analysis of accounts that retweeted using the hashtag #HowRutoSabotagedUhuru (Source: CfA via Gephi)

The trend resulted in a total of 3,150 tweets. The accounts @ItsNyambane and @ItsRileyKe were among the top 10 influencers within the network. Having been retweeted 222 and 95 times, respectively.

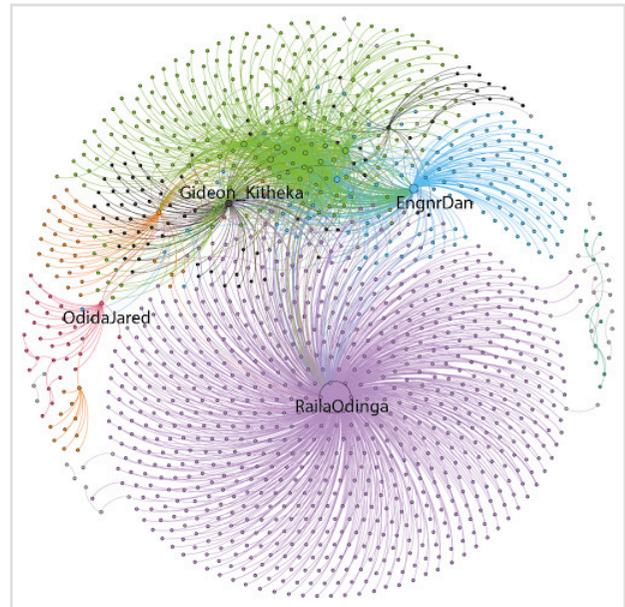
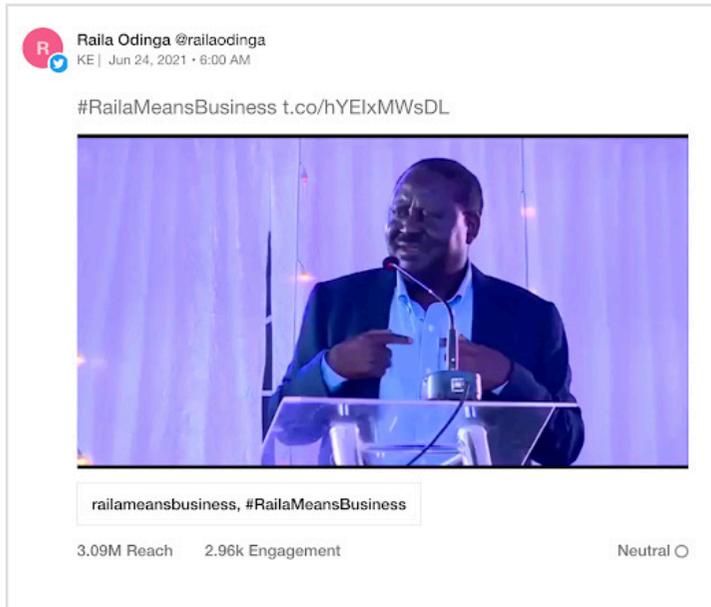
The accounts listed below had the most interaction rates on Twitter for each cluster.

	Account	Number of Retweets	Account creation date	Following	Followers
1	ItsNyambane	222	28 Dec 2015	15327	635
2	ItsRileyKe	95	20 Apr 2020	132277	7586
3	LincolnsJR	77	4 Mar 2020	5753	5122
4	IkeOjuok	66	14 Jun 2013	111431	411
5	CharleeOddie1	59	31 Aug 2016	29376	22531
6	HWanjikoh	58	13 Dec 2019	11538	900
7	ItsMutai	50	24 Jun 2012	452260	117094
8	C_isNyakundi	34	19 May 2020	658	172
9	Lynne_Soi	26	16 May 2019	11583	10687
10	PapaFathela_	24	5 Mar 2019	4317	2756

Account information of the most retweeted accounts in #HowRutoSabotagedUhuru cluster (Source: CFA via Twitter)

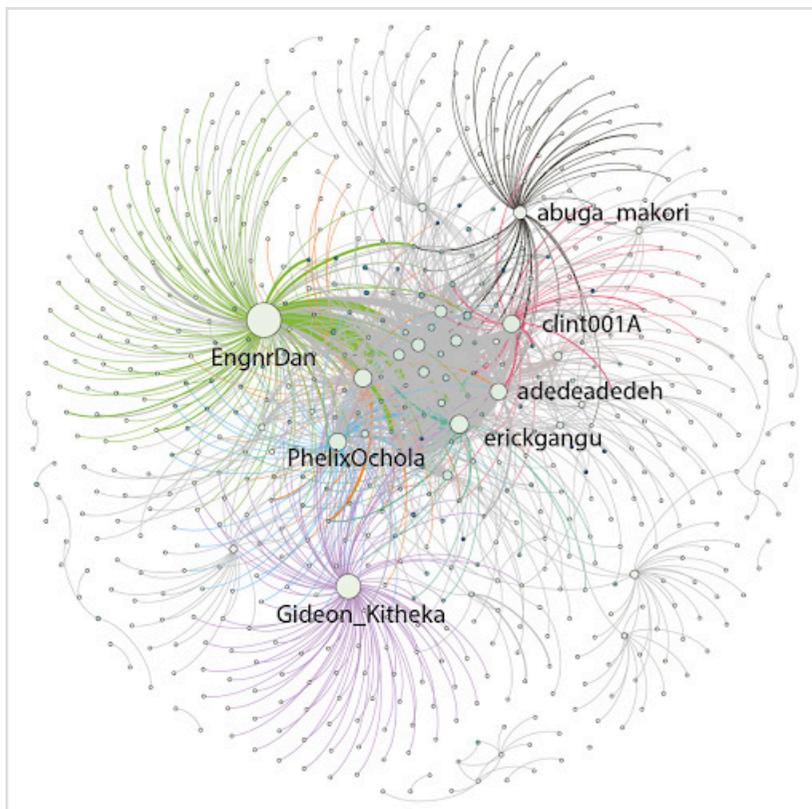
#RailaMeansBusiness

This trend resulted in the highest number of tweets compared to the rest of the hashtags, with a total of 9,660 tweets. The initial tweet using this hashtag was from Raila Odinga's personal Twitter account. The tweet was immediately amplified accounts making the hashtag one of the trending topics in the country.



Network analysis of accounts that retweeted using the hashtag #RailaMeansBusiness (Source: Cfa via Gephi)

An analysis of a subset of posts excluding Raila Odinga's tweet revealed a network of influential accounts that subsequently posted tweets using the hashtag resulting in high engagement.



Network analysis of amplifier accounts that retweeted using the hashtag #RailaMeansBusiness (Source: Cfa via Gephi)

These accounts included @EngnrDan and @OmwandhoVickery who were retweeted 239 and 238 times, respectively. The accounts listed below had the most interaction rates on Twitter for each cluster.

	Account	Number of Retweets	Account creation date	Following	Followers
1	EngnrDan	239	3 Dec 2015	68,725	10,667
2	OmwandhoVickery	238	11 May 2014	951	2,216
3	adedeadedeh	201	12 Sep 2011	16,037	5,273
4	erickgangu	185	20 Apr 2015	436	31
5	ItsNyamai	152	16 May 2012	5,827	3,428
6	clint001A	139	6 Oct 2015	7,266	7,444
7	CarolAlhajj	1344	31 Aug 2015	378	312
8	Gideon_Kitheka	109	18 May 2015	80,984	22,235
9	Phelixi	108	31 Dec 2010	3,091	3,710
10	phil_254	94	5 Apr 2009	18,946	1,679

Account information of the most retweeted accounts in the #RailaMeansBusiness cluster (Source: CFA via Twitter)

Conclusion

This investigation revealed that hashtags targeting or discussing specific politically exposed people in the country are increasingly being important to share the narratives targeted at the upcoming elections. Furthermore, a network of distinct users on Twitter consistently amplify trends that are supportive to their preferred candidates.

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