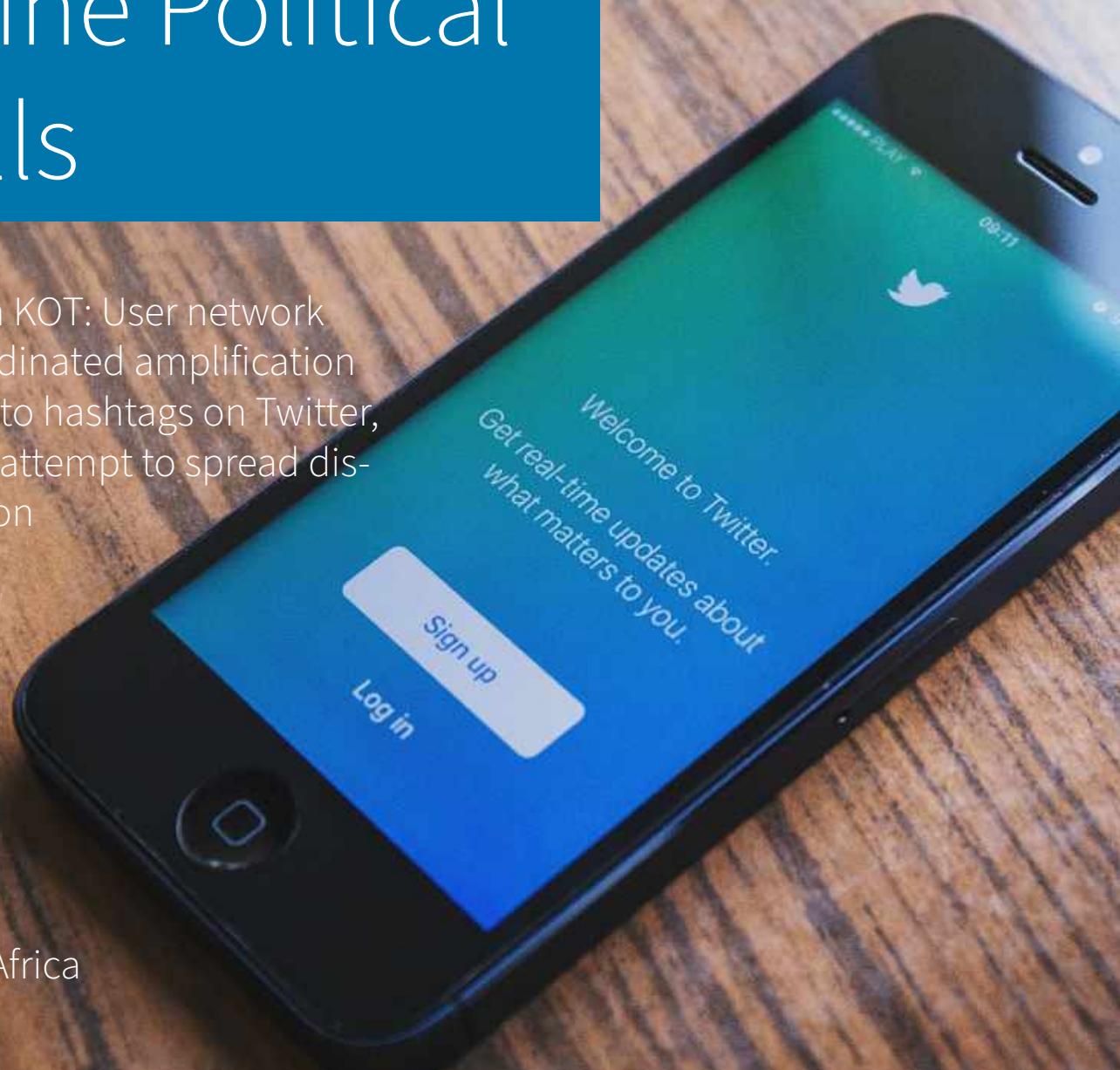




Online Political Trolls

Operation KOT: User network uses coordinated amplification of anti-Ruto hashtags on Twitter, in a likely attempt to spread dis-information



Code for Africa

06 2020

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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 15 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, radicalisation or other techniques.

The iLAB subscribes to CfA's guiding principles:

- 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 proof-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.
- We empower citizens. Empowering citizens is central to our mission. 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.

Glossary

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

Abbreviation	Description
ANCIR	African Network of Centres for Investigative Reporting
CfA	Code for Africa
CIB	Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour ¹
DCI	Directorate of Criminal Investigations
Kenyatta	Uhuru Kenyatta, President - Republic of Kenya
Kithure	Kithure Kindiki
KOT	Kenyans on Twitter
Odinga	Raila Odinga, Opposition leader - Republic of Kenya
Ruto	William Ruto, Deputy President - Republic of Kenya

¹ [Definition of terms](#)

Operation KOT²:

User network uses coordinated amplification of anti-Ruto hashtags on Twitter, in a likely attempt to spread disinformation³

By *Code for Africa*

Executive Summary

CfA identified a Twitter network supporting the Kenyatta and Odinga regime, and coordinated to amplify anti-Ruto hashtags. The move was seemingly targeted at discrediting Kenya's Deputy President William Samoei Ruto's (hereinafter referred to as Ruto) ambitions to vie for the presidency in Kenya's upcoming general elections to be held in the year 2022.

According to an article on [Al Jazeera](#), Ruto's supporters fear that President Uhuru Kenyatta (hereinafter referred to as Kenyatta) plans to renege on a power-sharing and succession pact, under which he would back Ruto for president at the 2022 elections after serving two terms. Ruto's relationship with Kenyatta has deteriorated since March 2018, when the president agreed to a rapprochement (famously known as "the handshake") with the opposition leader Raila Odinga (hereinafter referred to as Odinga) who also has presidential ambitions⁴.

The network, made up of 484 accounts, amplified hashtags by tweeting, retweeting, liking, replying, and mentioning each other's posts. Their actions suggest they engaged in inauthentic behaviour to make the hashtags seem more popular than they were, attempting to influence or manipulate the trending topics on Twitter. This was subsequently replicated on Facebook with several accounts using the same hashtags to amplify the conversations in public groups and pages.

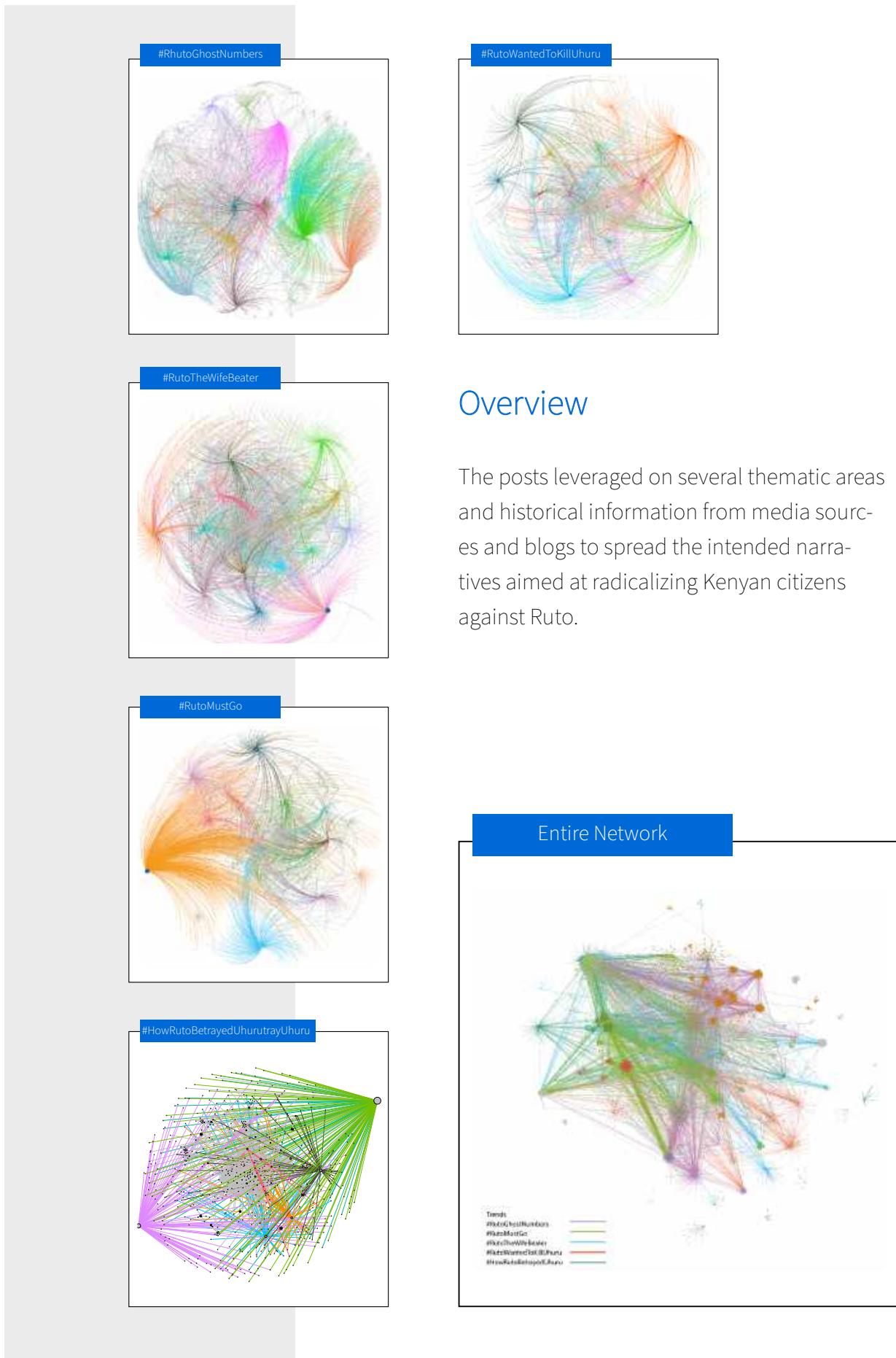
Further, CfA observed that individuals discussed in this investigation report leveraged on the trends to spread propaganda, disinformation and misinformation, themed against Ruto.

The operation began on 23 May 2020, when accounts on Twitter, some of them apparent in-authentic personal accounts, started and amplified the Twitter hashtag #RutoGhostNumbers, subsequently followed by several trending hashtags #RutoWantedToKillUhuru #RutoTheWife-Beater #RutoMustGo and #RutoWantedToBetrayUhuru on 24 May 2020, 25 May 2020, 26 May 2020 and 27 May 2020 respectively.

² KOT - Kenyans on Twitter

³ [Definition of terms](#)

⁴ [Standard Media Article](#)



The first hashtag #RutoGhostNumbers aimed at instilling or even mocking — in part through using a pejorative word “ghost” — the idea that Ruto did not have popular support in the senate.

The second hashtag #RutoWantedToKillUhuru is connected to a narrative that Ruto had the intention of assassinating President Kenyatta in a bid to take over the reigns of power.

The third hashtag #RutoTheWifeBeater pushed the narrative associating Ruto with domestic violence.



The fourth hashtag #RutoMustGo had tweets advocating for his removal from the position of deputy president.

The last hashtag #RutoWantedToBetrayUhuru is connected to a narrative pushed by the network claiming that Ruto had the intention of betraying Kenyatta while serving under him as the deputy president.



The context

Disinformation, misinformation and propaganda⁵ around elections are not new in Kenya, as these tools have most certainly been used to influence voters in past elections. Social media is the go-to platform for information for young people, who constituted more than half of the 19.6 million registered Kenyan voters in the last election. It is, therefore, not surprising that Kenyan social media was filled with disinformation and fake news, aiming to alter these young voters' perceptions, views and actions both before and after the last general election⁶.

According to an article on the [Daily Nation](#), an undercover investigation showcased how British data company Cambridge Analytica boasted of having influenced Kenya's 2017 presidential election. Fake news and disinformation against Odinga used skewed [videos](#) on issues that matter most to Kenyans— such as health, infrastructure, and terrorism.

Such damaging information was discreetly pushed onto the internet and social media, according to Mark Turnbull, the managing director of Cambridge Analytica's Political Global. In a covert [film](#) by UK broadcaster Channel 4 posted on YouTube on 19 March 2018, he was featured saying: "We just put information into the bloodstream of the internet, and then, and then watch it grow, give it a little push every now and again... like a remote control. It has to happen without anyone thinking, 'that's propaganda', because the moment you think 'that's propaganda', the next question is, 'who's put that out?'".

In light of the upcoming general elections, it is expected that disinformation will continue to manifest. CfA therefore identified the need to monitor social media interactions to identify, analyse and report on such activities in order to educate the public to make better informed decisions.

5 [Definition of terms](#)
6 [Aljazeera article](#)

The network

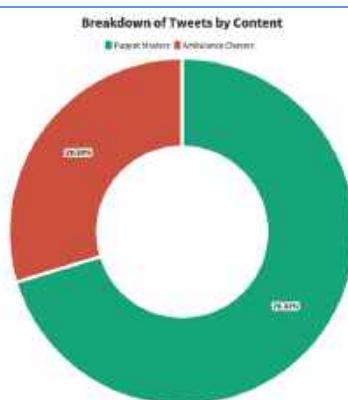
Trends on Twitter are determined by an algorithm and, by default, are tailored based on followers, interests and location. The algorithm identifies topics that are popular at that moment, rather than topics that have been popular for a while or on a daily basis. Hashtags are specifically tailored to individual topics. In total, the five hashtags under review garnered 23,670 mentions combined and were posted by 10,923 unique accounts in five days.

The ambulance chasers

CfA observed a network of users who leverage on trending topics to market and promote goods and services. The accounts in this network don't contribute to the narrative being shared within the trends. They are characterised by the following metrics:

- Tweeting with excessive, unrelated hashtags (usually the top trending hashtags for the day) in a single Tweet or across multiple Tweets;
- They tend to drive traffic or attention from a conversation on Twitter to accounts, websites, products, services, or initiatives;
- Contains contact information such as phone numbers and email. Users are directed to either call, or send a message via sms & whatsapp .

The network's assets interspersed their advertisement/ marketing posts with high volumes of hashtags, links to websites and contact information. CfA has therefore nicknamed the network "The ambulance chasers". CfA noted that ambulance chasers contributed 7,131 tweets across the 5 hashtags, which is approximately 30% of the total number of tweets in the network.



Notably, 53% of the tweets under #RutoWantedToKillUhuru were ambulance chasers. This indicated that tweets from ambulance chasers had a significant contribution to the amplification of the trending topics.

This kind of parasitic behaviour is corrosive to the discussions and narratives being conducted on social platforms and undermines civic discourse and digital democracy.

CfA considered these tweets as “noise” - unrelated to the topic, and only using the trend to amplify their own agenda - and therefore undertook a data clean-up exercise to exclude them.

The Puppet Masters

These are accounts that contributed to the actual narratives being discussed. CfA narrowed down to 16,539 mentions tied to 7,488 unique accounts across the five hashtags.

Out of the 7,488 unique accounts, CfA noted that 484 accounts (referred to as “the network”) posted in at least three hashtags. 73 accounts created original tweets using the hashtags while 411 accounts amplified posts using the hashtags. The network acted in a coordinated way to promote an anti-Ruto campaign.

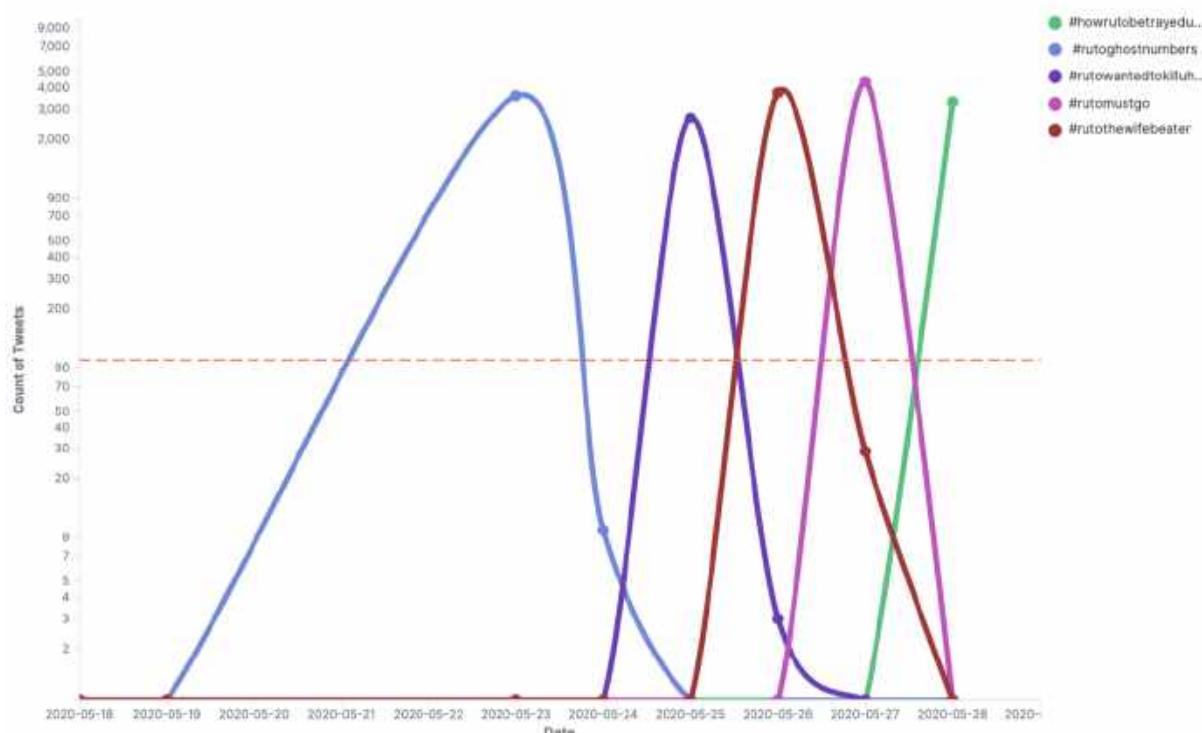


Image showing the timeline plot of the tweets spreading the hashtags #RutoGhostNumbers #RutoWantedToKillUhuru #RutoTheWifeBeater #RutoMustGo and #RutoWantedToBetrayUhuru from May 23 to May 27, 2020.
 (Source: [CfA](#))

The hashtags’ timelines plotted against the tweet count are fitted on a log scale. The log scale allows for fitting a widespread set of results onto the graph that might otherwise not fit in a linear way, thus is ideal in highlighting substantial changes across the trends. From the timeline analysis of the tweet behaviour within the hashtags, we noted that the hashtags vaporise once the network stops tweeting about them, and moves on to use the next available anti-Ruto hashtag as observed in the diagram above.

CfA also noted that the activities of the network accounted for 40% of all mentions of the five hashtags, despite the number of unique accounts from the network representing less than 7% of the total number of unique accounts.

We further noted that out of the 7,488 identified unique accounts, 455 new accounts were created between 1 April 2020 and 28 May 2020. Of these, 26 were part of the network that contributed to the activities documented in this report.

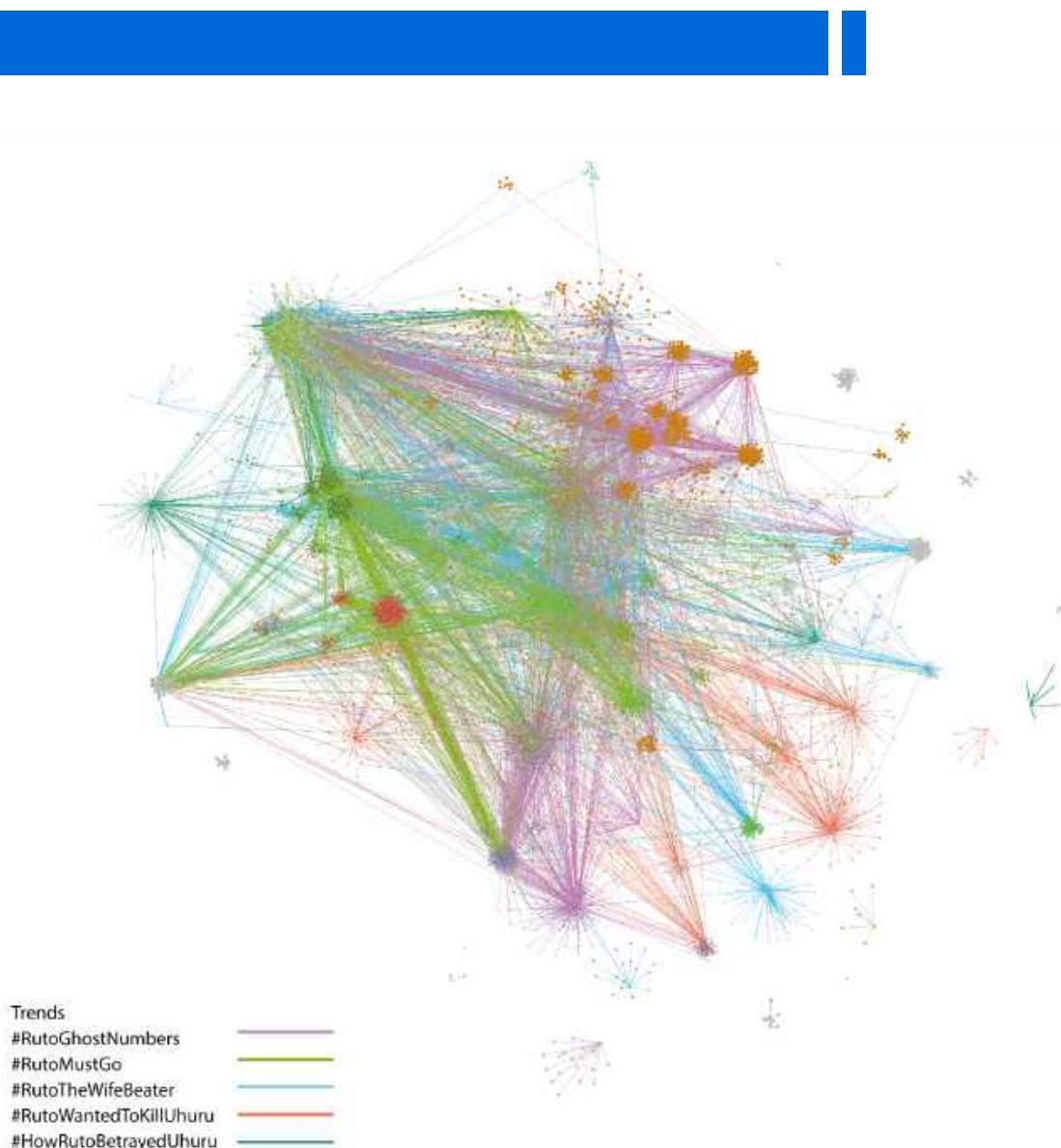


Image showing the distribution of the accounts spreading the hashtags #RutoGhostNumbers #RutoWantedToKillUhuru #Ruto-TheWifeBeater #RutoMustGo and #RutoWantedToBetrayUhuru from May 23 to May 27.
 (Source: Gephi/[CfA](#))

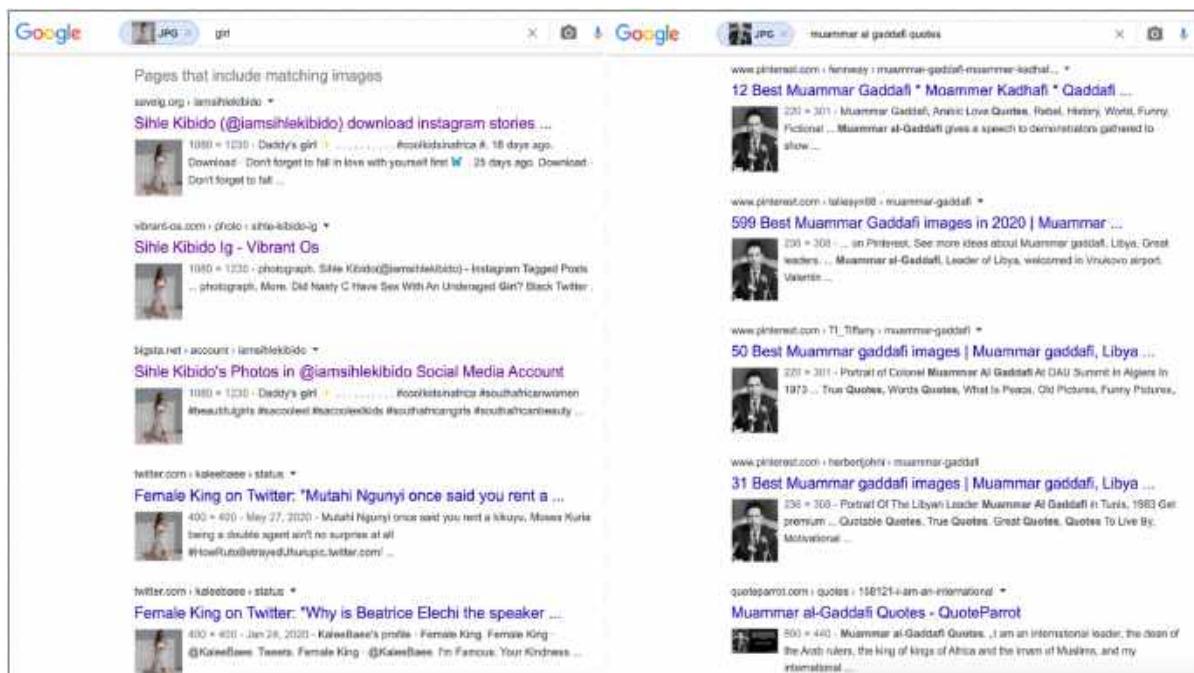
The most active accounts and the most retweeted accounts are listed in the table below. The top 10 most active accounts retweeted posts across the five hashtags.

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

Most Active Accounts		Most Retweeted Accounts		
	Account	No of re-tweets	Account	No of Retweets
1	MachungwaMachu1	291	o_abuga	801
2	KaleeBaee	159	cjamehk	677
3	Otis_Wis	145	rehemaa_	514
4	NgugiMane	135	victormochere	504
5	KibchoiJohn	114	kaleebaee	492
6	NathansDavids	114	hannah_mwangi_	487
7	TheRealAmbiyo	105	tabaka_finest	392
8	ProfesaLomedi	104	engnrdan	359
9	CaptKev_	100	peterkariukike	353
10	D_Gitonyi	100	briansikulu_	291

Tables showing the most active accounts and the most retweeted accounts in the network. (Source: [CfA](#))

The accounts [@MachungwaMachu1](#) and [@KaleeBaee](#) were the most active in the network. Both posted 291 and 159 retweets, respectively. A Google reverse image search on the profile picture for both accounts indicate that they are not original pictures and were sourced from [elsewhere](#) on the internet.



The screenshot shows a Google search results page with several image search results for 'Muammar al-Gaddafi' and 'Muammar Gaddafi'. The results include various portraits of Muammar Gaddafi, some with captions in Arabic. The search interface shows filters for 'Images' and 'Search tools'.

- 12 Best Muammar Gaddafi * Muammar Kadhafi ...
- 599 Best Muammar Gaddafi images in 2020 | Muammar ...
- 50 Best Muammar gaddafi images | Muammar gaddafi, Libya ...
- 31 Best Muammar gaddafi images | Muammar gaddafi, Libya ...
- Muammar al-Gaddafi Quotes - QuoteParrot

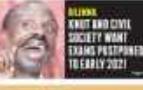
Using [Tweetbeaver](#), we noted that 18% of the 54 mutual followers between the two accounts were also part of the puppet masters' network. Notable among the followers is the account @[ismunuyui](#) whose malicious activities within the network are later described in this report.

CfA also noted that the interactions on their posts registered the connection between the two accounts.



@Femmale King [@tg_machu1](#)

Mutahi Ngunyi once said you rent a kikuyu. Moses Kuria being a double agent ain't no surprise at all. #HowRutoBetrayedUhuru

STAR [28 MAY 2020](#)  **BILKIN, KENYA AND CIVIL SOCIETY WANT EXAMS POSTPONED TO EARLY 2021**

The double agent

Moses Kuria has reportedly been meeting David Murathe and Njoroge Muturi at a house in Karen. A close associate to the three has revealed... [View Article](#)

112 AM - May 28, 2020 - Twitter for Android

@tg_machu1 [@tg_machu1](#)

Just like his corrupt counterpart Walitu the state has frozen Kenyan Chief Priest of Corruption accounts. #HowRutoBetrayedUhuru

DAILY NATION [Monday, May 25, 2020](#)  **State freezes Ruto account**

Kenyans have reacted to reports that the Central Bank of Kenya has frozen a \$2 million dollar bank mandate from a Dubai firm owned by former lawyer Pugott.

7:07 AM - May 26, 2020 - Twitter for Android

@KaleeBaee retweeted original tweets from @MachungwaMachu1 and vice versa (Source: [@MachungwaMachu1/archive](#))



CfA further noted that the two accounts used the same method to perpetuate the intended anti-Ruto narrative. The tweets above show a fake front page for two popular newspapers in Kenya, Daily Nation and The Star, shared under the hashtag #HowRutoBetrayedUhuru. CfA confirmed the appearance of the newspapers and noted that they were orchestrated to deceive:



CfA further noted that this has been a recent trend in the spread of disinformation in Kenya. According to an [article](#) published by [The Star](#) on 9 June 2020, the Kenya Copyright Board, in collaboration with Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) detectives, tracked down and arrested the man alleged to be behind the circulation of fake front page print newspapers in the country. Kenya Copyright Board executive director Edward Sigei said the board is hunting down others behind fake news circulation.

We also identified another case using the same fakery method to share disinformation on Facebook. A [post](#) by user [Otoyo Abange](#) posted on 27 May 2020 used a fake newspaper front page claiming that Ruto's wife Rachael Ruto was in hiding after being a victim of domestic violence. This claim has since been fact-checked by [AfricaCheck](#), an independent fact-checking organisation and found to be [false](#). Facebook has since flagged the post as false information.



The Standard newspaper has since published a post on both [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to show that the image had been manipulated to suit the narrative being pushed.

Pro-Ruto pushback

CfA noted that within the network were accounts that propagated pro-Ruto push-back in response to the false narratives shared across the hashtags. We however did not establish evidence of coordinated behaviour, but rather what seem to be organic responses. We also did not identify any hashtag created as a response to the anti-Ruto hashtags used by the network under investigation.



What Are the Core Narratives
Being Propagated by These
Communities?

Chronological Mapping Series

23 May 2020 - 28 May 2020

Ruto Ghost Numbers

The #RutoGhostNumbers trend, which began on 23 May 2020, was related to the Kenyan Senate chamber vote held on Friday, 22 May 2020 where the deputy speaker of the senate, Kithure Kindiki (Kithure), was ousted from the position after a motion seeking his removal was tabled by Senate Majority Whip Irungu Kang'ata on the grounds of disloyalty to orders from his political party.

Kithure, a close ally of Ruto, was accused of being disloyal to the ruling Jubilee Party after he failed to attend the Senate Parliamentary Group meeting that was convened by Kenyatta at State House. Senate members allied to Ruto had initially planned to quash the motion claiming they had the requisite numbers in the senate.

According to [Article 106 \(2\)](#) of the Kenyan Constitution, two-thirds of the members of a House of Parliament are required to remove a deputy speaker. The chamber is composed of a total of [67 senators](#). In absentia of six members, 54 out of the 61 senators present voted for his removal. This then prompted an outburst of tweets claiming that Ruto had ‘ghost numbers’ in Parliament under the hashtag #RutoGhostNumbers.



On 23 May 2020, a tweet posted by user Denis Otieno-Onyango at 05:58am depicting an animated Ruto beaten to the ground, sparked a conversation that resulted in this trend. On closer inspection of the profile [@Otingo](#), we identified several posts in support of Odinga and others strongly criticising Ruto.

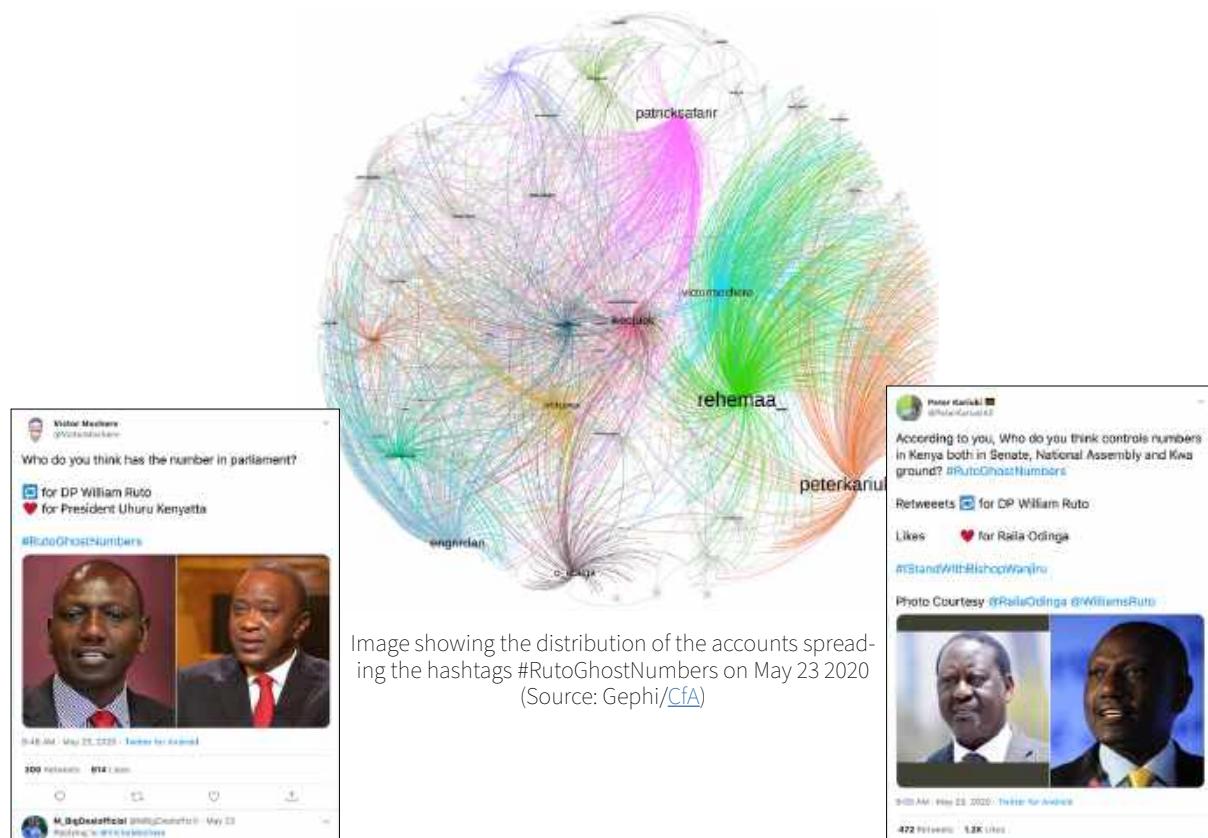
Further analysis of #RutoGhostNumbers pointed to an interesting trend amplification mechanism we are calling '**poll-based amplification strategy**'.

One of the [posts](#) with the highest interaction rate, which resulted in the trend being amplified, called for users to retweet in support of Ruto and like the tweet in support of Kenyatta. The post generated over 500 retweets and 1,000 likes, which could possibly have contributed to Twitter's algorithms ranking the hashtag as a trending topic in Kenya.

A sample of the tweet from user @Rehemaa_ can be seen on the right.



A network analysis of the tweets collected on the day of the trend shows a cluster of influential accounts acting as the main hotspots spreading the conversation. User [@rehemaa_](#) was one of the individuals with the highest interaction rate which is attributed to the tweet behaviour seen above.



Ruto Wanted To Kill Uhuru

A tweet posted by [@NgugiMane](#) on 25 May 2020 at 6:02am initiated the second wave of the anti-Ruto hashtags #RutoWantedToKillUhuru, this time round spreading the narrative that Ruto wanted to assassinate President Kenyatta in order to ascend to power. The post had one characteristic similar to the first post in the previous hashtag – an animated image. We noted that the image used had been posted by [@DailyNation](#) on 24 May 2020.



Source tweet for #RutoWantedToKillUhuru from @Ngugi-Mane's profile (Source: [@NgugiMane/CfA](#))

User @NgugiMane joined Twitter on August 24 2019. Further analysis of the account attributes showed that it had the characteristics of a fake account. No identifiable information was linked to this account and the profile picture was obtained from a stocked website called [essence](#).

A network analysis of the tweets collected on the day of the trend shows a cluster of influential accounts acting as the main hotspots spreading the conversation.

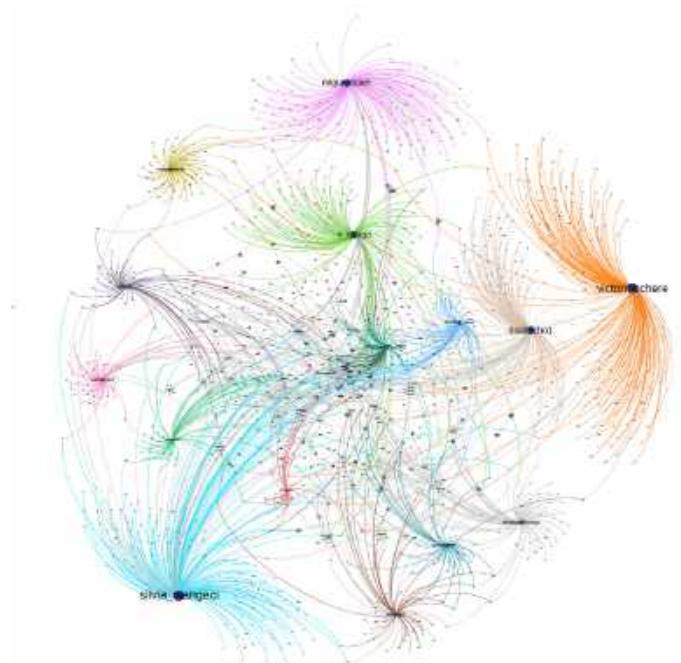


Image showing the distribution of the accounts spreading the hashtag #RutoWantedToKilluhuru on May 25 2020 (Source: Gephi/[CfA](#))

The most controversial tweets were posted by [@ismunyui](#), a profile that ranked among the ones with the highest interaction rate within the hashtag. Some of the tweets had claims that were further fact-checked and found to be false.

A [tweet](#) posted by [@ismunyui](#) at 6:27am showing a [video](#) claiming that Former Lugari MP Cyrus Jirongo had revealed how Ruto allegedly strangled a man to death, contributed to the amplification of the hashtag. Further, we noted a subsequent tweet claiming that a Ugandan newspaper had published a detailed article on how a Ugandan intelligence officer intercepted a plot to assassinate Kenyatta.



Controversial tweets under #RutoWantedToKillUhuru from @ismunyui's profile
(Source: [@ismunyui/CfA](#))



Tweet
Kevin Munyui (@ismunyui)
Cyrus Jirongo jhad revealed that the DP had strangled a young man to death #RutoWantedToKillUhuru
[The Untold story](#)

HOW WILLIAM RUTO STRANGLED A MAN TO DEATH
0:00 24.3K views
6:27 AM · May 20, 2020 · Twitter for Android
177 Retweets 401 Likes



Tweet
Kevin Munyui (@ismunyui)
There is an article by a Ugandan News Paper detailing how #RutoWantedToKillUhuru
AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL
REPORTING AFRICA SINCE 1996
The plot to Assassinate Uhuru
2019 Jan 2019

A dunning story from Uganda's internal security organization (ISCO) has claimed that a Ugandan Intelligence Officer intercepted an assassination plot on Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, on 19th January 2019.

Bryan Pearson, the Managing Director of African Confidential had initially shared a disclaimer on the newsroom's website indicating that the screenshot above, which was circulating on social media, was false and had not been published on their official website or digital archives.



#False report of an #assassination attempt against President Kenyatta of #Kenya. A story circulating on social media today purportedly of a story published by Africa Confidential with the headline "The Plot to Assassinate Uhuru" is a fabrication. **#fakenews #africaconf**

 **FAKE NEWS ALERT**

3:35 PM · May 22, 2020 · Twitter Web App
79 Retweets 52 Likes



AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL
REPORTING AFRICA SINCE 1996 | 10 JUNE 2020

Vol 61 No 10
Published Sat Mar 2020

False report of an assassination attempt against President Kenyatta Sat Mar 2020

Dear Readers

Take down of an assassination attempt against President Kenyatta

This is to inform you that a story circulating on social media today purportedly claims published by Africa Confidential with the headline "The Plot to Assassinate Uhuru" is false.

Africa Confidential has not published any exclusively with that headline or news as previously reported from our website and digital archive. One witness has gone to great lengths to check the sources of all our reports and analyses - it is general is our journalistic commitment to you.

Only fully verified reports will appear on the Africa Confidential website and archive and linked to our social media feeds. Along with that information, we are determined to uphold the trust our reliable and accurate information as a public good and reject all attempts to manipulate the print and electronic media.

We're currently trying to track down who might be behind this fabrication and how they might have spread it so widely from it. In the meantime, we wish Kenyans over very well wishes as just as we all try to keep back the global coronavirus pandemic. Stay safe and in good health.

Meet the team

Bryan Pearson & Patrick Smith
Managing Director & Editor,
Africa Confidential

Confirmation from @Africa_Conf on the claims of assassination attempt against Kenyatta
(Source: [@Africa_Conf/archive](#))



CfA further observed the hashtag shifting to the Facebook platform where a user named Esther Gathoni Bigwig shared a post claiming that after the burial of music producer Bruce Odhiambo, held on 19 January 2019, Ruto had a plan to assassinate Kenyatta but was rescued by Odinga.



Esther Gathoni Bigwig
[profile](#) and [post](#) in one of the Facebook Groups
(Source: [@EstherBigwig/archive](#))

Esther Gathoni Bigwig ► Team JOHO 2022
26 May at 13:45 ·

William Ruto had laid a Watertight plan to kill President Uhuru Kenyatta so that he can became the president, The plan was to happen after Bruce Odhiambo Burial, But when president Uhuru Kenyatta was about to board air force one, Raila Odinga pulled him aside, alerted him and they drove away with no bodyguards and assistants.
And from that day, President Uhuru Kenyatta broke his trust and good relationship with Ruto.
Ruto is that evil.He has killed everyone who thought to do the same to his Boss, but God Loves Kenya.
#RutoWantedToKillUhuru



CfA identified a total of 18 public Facebook groups and pages with a combined total following of 2,750,192 Facebook users, where the post was shared. A review of the Facebook profile indicated that the account was mainly used to post and share pro-Uhuru and anti-Ruto narratives to public and private facebook groups.

Facebook Page	No of Followers	Facebook Page	No of Followers
KENYA POLITICAL FORUM	1,014,477	NYANDARUA PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY	63,996
GOR MAHIA FC - WORLDWIDE	854,526	Team JOHO 2022	62,794
KENYA BREAKING NEWS (Happening now)	147,479	Building Bridges Initiative (BBI)	48,084
NEW MERU ECONOMIC	133,373	MWEA PEOPLE	38,086
KENYAN DAILY NEWS	128,910	NYERI COUNTY FOR CHANGE	29,780
COMRADES CAMPUS LIFE FORUM	122,265	Dr Fred Matiangi Supporters	18,843
Friends of Moses Kuria	73,857	NYANDARUA BUNGE LA MWANA-NCHI	13,722

Showing 18 of 18 results since May 9, 2020 1:06 PM

SORT BY Most interactions

KENYA POLITICAL F...

14 days ago - posted by FB User

William Ruto had laid a Watertight plan to kill President Uhuru Kenyatta so that he can become the president, The plan was to happen after Bruce Odhiambo Burial, But... See more



You cannot BLACKMAIL your BOSS and WIN

81 275 34

KENYAN DAILY NEWS

14 days ago - posted by FB User

William Ruto had laid a Watertight plan to kill President Uhuru Kenyatta so that he can became the president, The plan was to happen after Bruce Odhiambo Burial, But... See more



You cannot BLACKMAIL your BOSS and WIN

134 130 11

Team JOHO 2022

14 days ago - posted by FB User

William Ruto had laid a Watertight plan to kill President Uhuru Kenyatta so that he can became the president, The plan was to happen after Bruce Odhiambo Burial, But... See more



You cannot BLACKMAIL your BOSS and WIN

147 86 9

KENYA BREAKING N...

14 days ago - posted by FB User

William Ruto had laid a Watertight plan to kill President Uhuru Kenyatta so that he can become the president, The plan was to happen after Bruce Odhiambo Burial, But... See more



You cannot BLACKMAIL your BOSS and WIN

75 135 4

NYANDARUA PEOP...

14 days ago - posted by FB User

William Ruto had laid a Watertight plan to kill President Uhuru Kenyatta so that he can become the president, The plan was to happen after Bruce Odhiambo Burial, But... See more



You cannot BLACKMAIL your BOSS and WIN

40 172 0

Dr Fred Matiangi Su...

14 days ago - posted by FB User

William Ruto had laid a Watertight plan to kill President Uhuru Kenyatta so that he can become the president, The plan was to happen after Bruce Odhiambo Burial, But... See more



You cannot BLACKMAIL your BOSS and WIN

79 50 20

Esther Gathoni Bigwig profile and post in one of the Facebook Groups (Source: @EstherBigwig/archive)



Ruto The Wife Beater

The hashtag was first posted by @its_MwangiF, a digital media and political doyen at Jubilee Party Kenya as per the profile bio. The account, which was created on 31 August 2015, also posted tweets across three out of the five trending hashtags.



Mwangi Francis [Follow](#)

When it get to domestic violence that's when u know he is a pretender
Some times back I saw people saying that Rachel has been flown out of the country for treatment. This happened when she was beaten up for questioning Him about extra marital sex activities
#RutoTheWifeBeater

Mwangi Francis [Follow](#)

Digital Media & political doyen. [@JubileePartyK](#)
IG @itmwangifrancis
Hedonist ..Humanitarian..
#KenyaMtbela Let's Trend!
Nairobi, Kenya [mcafee/08ium0?Rmwang...](#) Joined August 2015
9,556 Following 12.8K Followers

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes

Pinned Tweet
Mwangi Francis [@its_MwangiF](#) - Apr 14
#KenyaUnbowed despite all.. we will overcome this pandemic and go back to our normal lives even stronger than before..

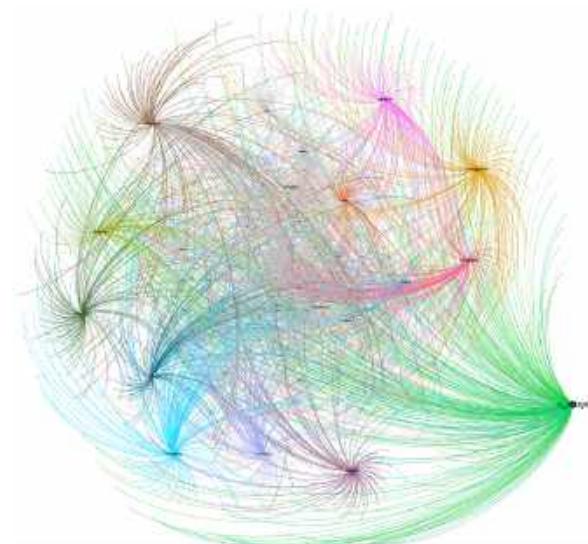
Ruto's wife was devastated at the rumors that her husband was having an affair with Emmy Kosgey.

7:01 PM - 26 May 2020

Source tweet for #RutoTheWifeBeater from @its_MwangiF profile (Source: [@its_MwangiF/CfA](#))

A network analysis of the tweets collected on the day of the trend shows a cluster of influential accounts acting as the main hotspots spreading the conversation. User @rehemaa_ was one of the individuals with the highest interaction rate which is attributed to the poll-based amplification strategy seen above.

Image showing the distribution of the accounts spreading the hashtags #RutoTheWifeBeater on May 26 2020
(Source: Gephi/[CfA](#))



Notably, [@MugamboWaAfrica](#) was one of the accounts that amplified this particular trend by posting a photo claiming that Rachael Ruto, the wife of Ruto was a subject of domestic violence and abuse. A [fact check](#) done by Mtaani Radio confirmed that the photo used in the post dated back to 12 June 2017 when it was used on a local blog Kenyans.co.ke.



The screenshot shows the homepage of Mtaani Radio. At the top is the Mtaani Radio logo, featuring a stylized 'm' and 'R' with orange and yellow gradients and a small antenna icon above it. Below the logo is the text 'Mtaani Radio'. A horizontal navigation bar follows, with links: HOME, CORONA UPDATES, NEWS, ABOUT US, PROGRAMMES, STAFF PROFILES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CONTACTS, and a magnifying glass icon for search. Under the navigation bar, there is a thin horizontal line of text: 'se into charcoal | Kene! Polisi wa Ruto aliyefaniki alikuwa na diondo la niasi shingoni | Ministry of Education donates lockers to the new Riruto Mixed Secondary School'. Below this line is a large, solid purple rectangular area that obscures the main content of the post. At the very bottom of the page, just above the footer, is a thin horizontal line of text: 'Posted on: June 6, 2020 · Posted by: Mtaani Admin · Comments: 0'.

False: This Photo is not associated with claims of that Rachael Ruto facing Domestic Violence

Posted on: June 6, 2020 · Posted by: Mtaani Admin · Comments: 0

Ruto Must Go

A tweet from [@TangaTangaMove1](#) set the ball rolling for #RutoMustGo in the early morning of 27 May 2020. On further review, CfA noted that the account was created on 26 May 2020, just a day before, and the account attributes indicated that it was a fake account created solely for this purpose. The profile picture showed a photoshopped picture of Ruto and the username referenced the term ‘Tanga Tanga’, a name which has recently been embraced by individuals/politicians allied to Ruto.



TangaTanga Lies
@TangaTangaMove1
Joined May 2020
14 Following 5 Followers

[Tweets](#) [Tweets & replies](#) [Media](#) [Likes](#)

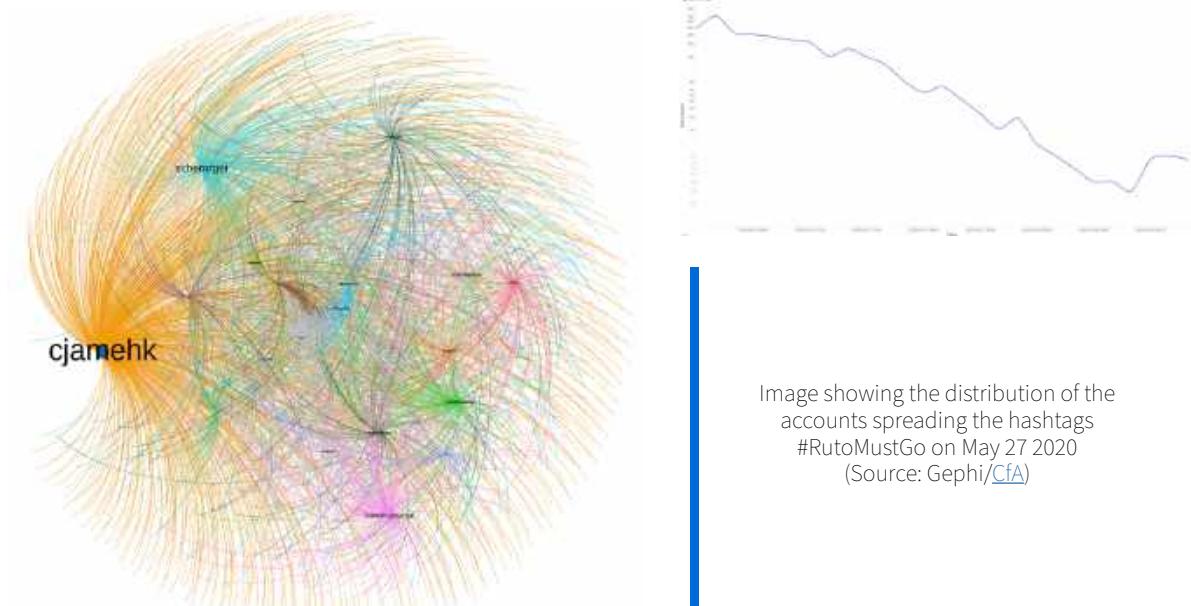
I have never seen a deputy president behaving as if he is a CO president, and instructs his rented followers to abuse, undermine and undermine the president.



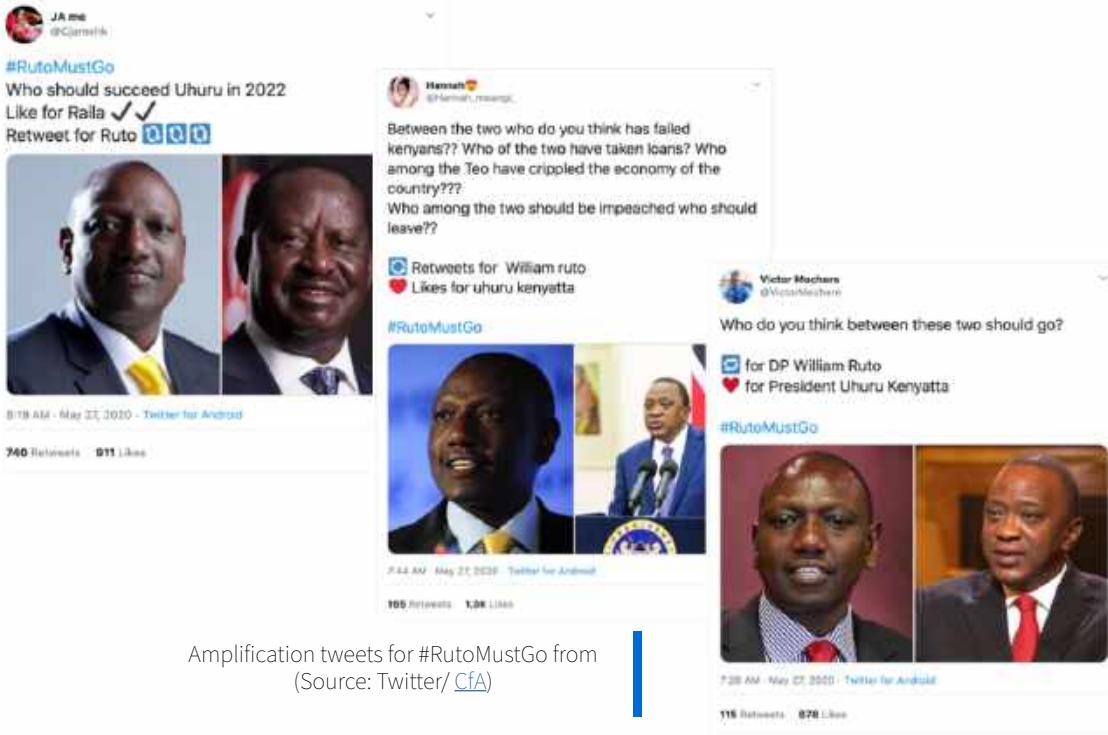
6:02 AM · May 27, 2020 · Twitter for Android

Source tweet for #RutoMustGo from [@TangaTangaMove1](#) profile
(Source: [@TangaTangaMove1](#) / CfA)

A network analysis of the tweets collected on the day of the trend also shows a cluster of accounts acting as key amplifiers of the hashtag.



Users @cjamehk, @hannah_mwangi_ and @victormochere were the individuals with the highest interaction rates, which is attributed to the tweet behaviour observed in the first trend where users leveraged on a poll-based amplification strategy, prompting Twitter algorithms to rank the hashtag as a top trending conversation in the country.



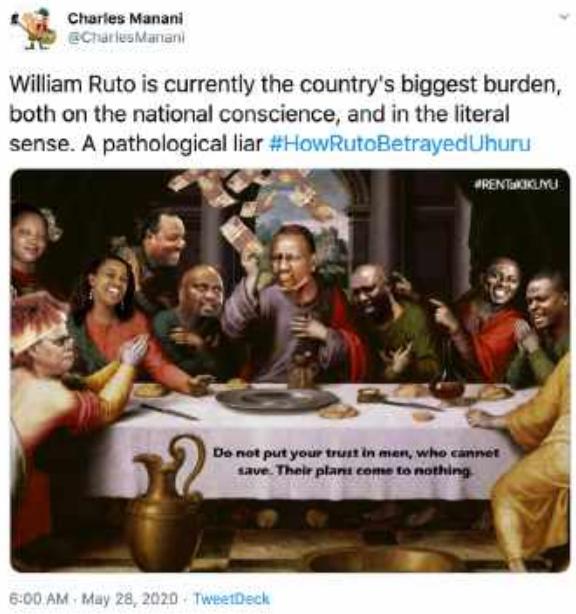
The image shows three separate tweets from different users, all using the hashtag #RutoMustGo to compare two Kenyan political figures, William Ruto and Uhuru Kenyatta.

- User 1 (@Cjamehk):** "Who should succeed Uhuru in 2022 Like for Raila ✓✓ Retweet for Ruto" followed by two profile pictures of the two men. The post has 8188 Retweets and 911 Likes.
- User 2 (@Hannah_mwangi_):** "Between the two who do you think has failed kenyans?? Who of the two have taken loans? Who among the two have crippled the economy of the country??? Who among the two should be impeached who should leave???" followed by two profile pictures of the two men. The post has 189 Retweets and 1.2K Likes.
- User 3 (@VictorMochere):** "Who do you think between these two should go? for DP William Ruto for President Uhuru Kenyatta" followed by two profile pictures of the two men. The post has 116 Retweets and 878 Likes.

Amplification tweets for #RutoMustGo from (Source: Twitter/ [CfA](#))

How Ruto Betrayed Uhuru

CfA observed a relationship with the source tweets for the other trends where the first tweet had an animated photo of Ruto. In this scenario, the photo had a hashtag #RentAKikuyu, seemingly spreading the narrative that he was giving money to the Kikuyu tribe in order to buy their votes/ support.



Source tweet for #HowRutoBetrayedUhuru from @CharlesManani's profile (Source: @[CharlesManani](#)/CfA)

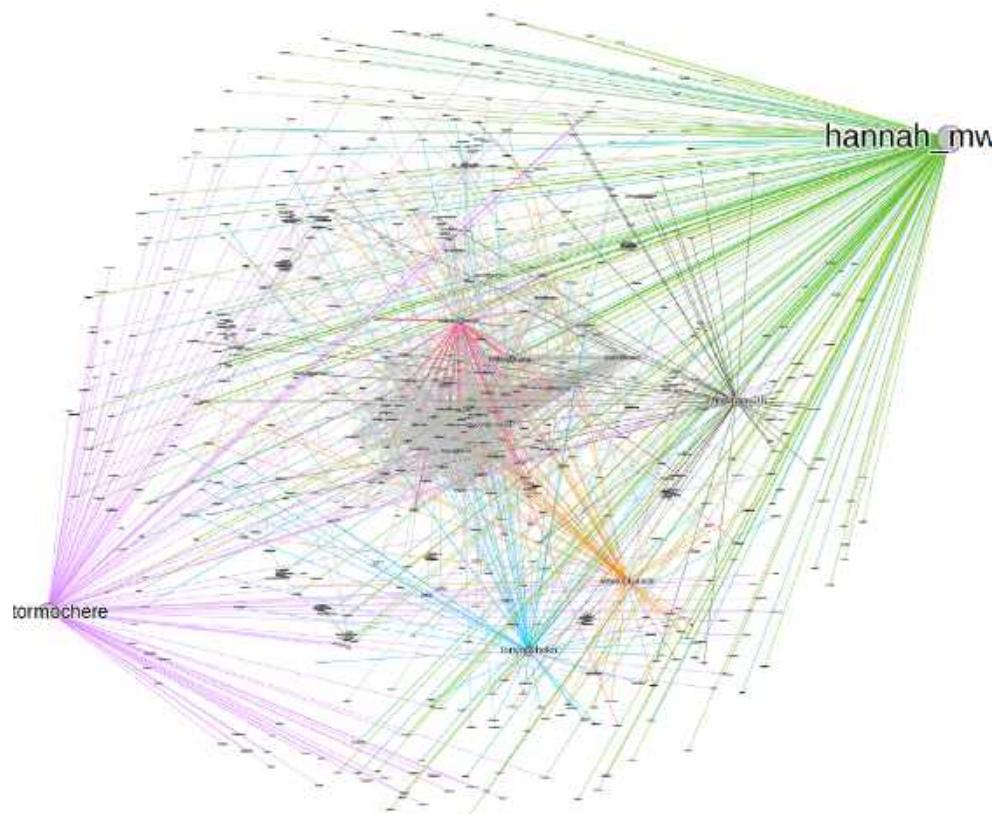


Image showing the distribution of the accounts spreading the hashtags #HowRutoBetrayedUhuru on May 28 2020
 (Source: Gephi/CfA)

From the network analysis, [@hannah_mwangi](#) and [@victormochere](#) were the accounts with the highest interaction rates.

CFA observed that the two accounts were on opposite sides of the discussion. [@hannah_mwangi](#) was in support of Ruto while [@victormochere](#) was posting anti-Ruto narratives.



Hannah 🇰🇪 @Hannah_mwangi - May 28
I know you don't know the deputy president of Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, simply because they are silenced by their masters. In kenya we have a working dip that's why President uhuru is trying all ways to intimidate William Ruto by using etwoli and murathe #HowRutoBetrayedUhuru



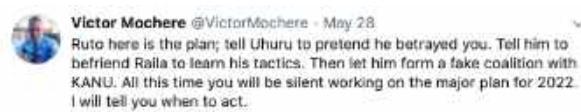
88 109 724

The post by [@hannah_mwangi](#) claims that deputy presidents of neighbouring countries such as Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania are silenced by the respective heads of state, while in Kenya Ruto's visibility is attributed to the work he does.

On the other hand, the posts from [@victormochere](#) with the highest interaction rates used popular movie references such as 'Money Heist' and 'Blacklist', to drive the #HowRutoBetrayedUhuru narrative.



Victor Mochere @VictorMochere - May 28
Dembe get the jet we are going to Nairobi. Tell Herold we'll need backup, it's William Ruto, he has betrayed the President.
#HowRutoBetrayedUhuru

Victor Mochere @VictorMochere - May 28
Ruto here is the plan; tell Uhuru to pretend he betrayed you. Tell him to befriend Raila to learn his tactics. Then let him form a fake coalition with KANU. All this time you will be silent working on the major plan for 2022. I will tell you when to act.

#HowRutoBetrayedUhuru



Conclusions

A network of accounts supporting the Kenyatta and Odinga regime engaged in coordination to amplify hashtags targeting Ruto, within the period 23 May – 28 May 2020. The accounts leveraged on a poll-based amplification strategy to make the hashtags feature in the top trending topics in the country.

CfA has established that the trend still continues and monitoring is required to identify perpetrators who leverage on trending hashtags to spread disinformation. This is based on the observation of additional trending hashtags on Twitter listed below:

- 29 June 2020: #TangaTangaThugs
- 24 June 2020: #URPAsiliCriminals
- 09 June 2020: #RutoTheDictator
- 05 June 2020: #HaslaMwitu
- 04 June 2020: #RutosGhostProjects

Media personnel should be empowered with skills and toolsets to conduct network analysis and set up watchlists in order to identify and conduct continuous monitoring of suspected accounts spreading disinformation.

Despite this obvious anti-Ruto bias, it is unclear whether any person or entity directly affiliated with the Uhuru and Raila regime was involved in the manipulated traffic around the five hashtags identified in this analysis.

Recommendations

Newsrooms should consider the following:

- Setting up investigative desks with dedicated teams;
- Upscaling the investigative skills of the internal teams to conduct investigations into co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour;
- Monitoring of social media platforms to identify trends that have indicators of manipulation;
- Conducting follow-up and additional investigation to identify key puppet masters, given that the behaviour observed in this investigation is ongoing;
- Adopting the factual findings reporting structure for published articles to ensure supporting evidence is available for investigative reports.

Our methodology

This report was prepared based on factual findings resulting from the high-level procedures performed as described below. The procedures were performed based on those facts supported by evidence as indicated in the dossier and annotated in the annexures.

Procedures performed

During the review, we performed the following procedures:

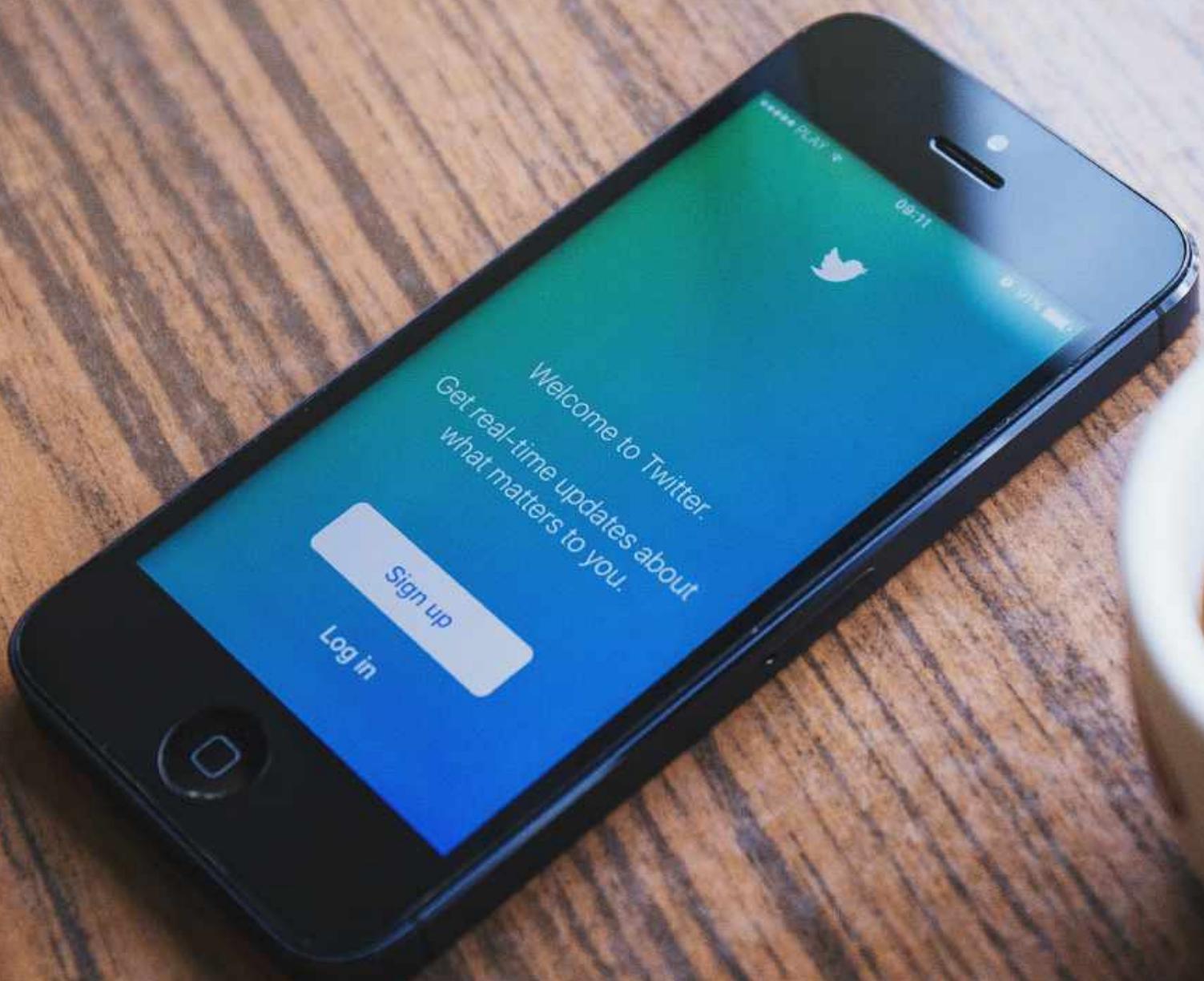
1. Data collection and gathering - This involved scraping and collecting original tweets and retweets tied to the political troll hashtags using Python's [twint library](#);
2. Preliminary analysis - analysis and visualization of the initial collected datasets to assess the viability of the investigation;
3. Data cleaning - CfA developed a scripted data cleaning matrix to enable us to extract relevant information from the dataset while excluding data that did not contribute to the overall objectives of the trending topics. The script enabled us to exclude tweets with text that matched words in a sales corpus;
4. Data Analysis and Visualization - Created a network analysis of the relevant dataset using [Gephi visualization software](#) in order to identify key topics and individuals;
5. Profiling and identification of narratives - Identified viral posts within the dataset and evaluated them for accuracy. CfA also generated a profile of the key individuals using the account attributes, account behaviour and post contents to identify the influential networks within the dataset;
6. Factual findings reporting - CfA documented all the findings and supporting evidence.

Sources of analysed data and information

Our analysis was based on data obtained from the following sources/ platforms:

- [23,670 tweets](#) posted using the five hashtags under consideration from Twitter;
- [486 facebook posts](#) using the five hashtags under consideration from Facebook

CfA has made available a [detailed technical methodology](#) to enable researchers to explore the dataset and conduct parallel investigations for such case scenarios.



Code for Africa is the continent's largest federation of civic technology and data journalism labs, with teams in: Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia & Uganda

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