Online Political Trolls

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

Code for Africa

06 2020
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*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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANCIR</td>
<td>African Network of Centres for Investigative Reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CfA</td>
<td>Code for Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIB</td>
<td>Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCI</td>
<td>Directorate of Criminal Investigations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenyatta</td>
<td>Uhuru Kenyatta, President - Republic of Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kithure</td>
<td>Kithure Kindiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOT</td>
<td>Kenyans on Twitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odinga</td>
<td>Raila Odinga, Opposition leader - Republic of Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruto</td>
<td>William Ruto, Deputy President - Republic of Kenya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Definition of terms
Operation KOT\(^2\):
User network uses coordinated amplification of anti-Ruto hashtags on Twitter, in a likely attempt to spread disinformation\(^3\)

*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 ambitions\(^4\).

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 inauthentic 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
Overview

The posts leveraged on several thematic areas and historical information from media sources and blogs to spread the intended narratives aimed at radicalizing Kenyan citizens against Ruto.
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 #Ruto WantedToKillUhuru 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 propaganda 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 election.

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.

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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.

![Graph](image)

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.

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.

(Source: CfA)
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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account</th>
<th>No of re-tweets</th>
<th>Account</th>
<th>No of Retweets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 MachungwaMachu1</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>o_abuga</td>
<td>801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 KaleeBaee</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>cjamehk</td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Otis_Wis</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>rehemaa_</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 NgugiMane</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>victormochere</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 KibichoiJohn</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>kaleebae</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 NathansDavids</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>hannah_mwangi_</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 TheRealAmbiyo</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>tabaka_finest</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 ProfesaLomedi</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>engnrdan</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 CaptKev_</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>peterkariukiike</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 D_Gitonyi</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>briansiku_</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
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 @ismunyui 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.
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.

![Fake newspaper front page](image)

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?
**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.

Image showing the distribution of the accounts spreading the hashtags #RutoGhostNumbers on May 23 2020 (Source: Gephi/CfA)
**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.

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.
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.

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.
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.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facebook Page</th>
<th>No of Followers</th>
<th>Facebook Page</th>
<th>No of Followers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KENYA POLITICAL FORUM</td>
<td>1,014,477</td>
<td>NYANDARUA PEOPLES’ ASSEMBLY</td>
<td>63,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOR MAHIA FC - WORLDWIDE</td>
<td>854,526</td>
<td>Team JOHO 2022</td>
<td>62,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KENYA BREAKING NEWS (Happening now)</td>
<td>147,479</td>
<td>Building Bridges Initiative (BBI)</td>
<td>48,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW MERU ECONOMIC</td>
<td>133,373</td>
<td>MWEA PEOPLE</td>
<td>38,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KENYAN DAILY NEWS</td>
<td>128,910</td>
<td>NYERI COUNTY FOR CHANGE</td>
<td>29,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMRADES CAMPUS LIFE FORUM</td>
<td>122,265</td>
<td>Dr Fred Matiangi Supporters</td>
<td>18,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Moses Kuria</td>
<td>73,857</td>
<td>NYANDARUA BUGE LA MWANANCHI</td>
<td>13,722</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Esther Gathoni Bigwig profile and post in one of the Facebook Groups (Source: @EstherBigwig/archive)
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.

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.
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.
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/po
citicians allied to Ruto.

A network analysis of the tweets collected on the day of the trend also shows a cluster of ac
ccounts 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.
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.

 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.
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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Nigeria (Abuja) Lab: Ventures Park, 29, Mambilla Street, Aso Drive, Abuja, Nigeria.
Tanzania Lab: 7th Floor, 38 Tanzanite Park, New Bagamoyo Road, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
Uganda Lab: Pollicy, Plot 7 Kulubya Road, Bugolobi, Kampala, Uganda.
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