



# A Global Tour of Disinformation

John Kelly Ph.D  
Founder, CEO  
October 6, 2020

An abstract digital visualization of a terrain, composed of a dense grid of small, vertical bars or columns. The bars vary in height, creating a sense of depth and elevation. The color palette is primarily warm, with shades of orange, yellow, and red, transitioning into darker, almost black, areas in the background. The overall effect is reminiscent of a digital topographical map or a data visualization of a complex, interconnected network.

For thousands of years, human civilization has organized around geographic terrain. It is where countries were formed, wars fought, and goods traded. The rise of the networked society has resulted in the emergence of a new cyber-social terrain, which is now the key domain.

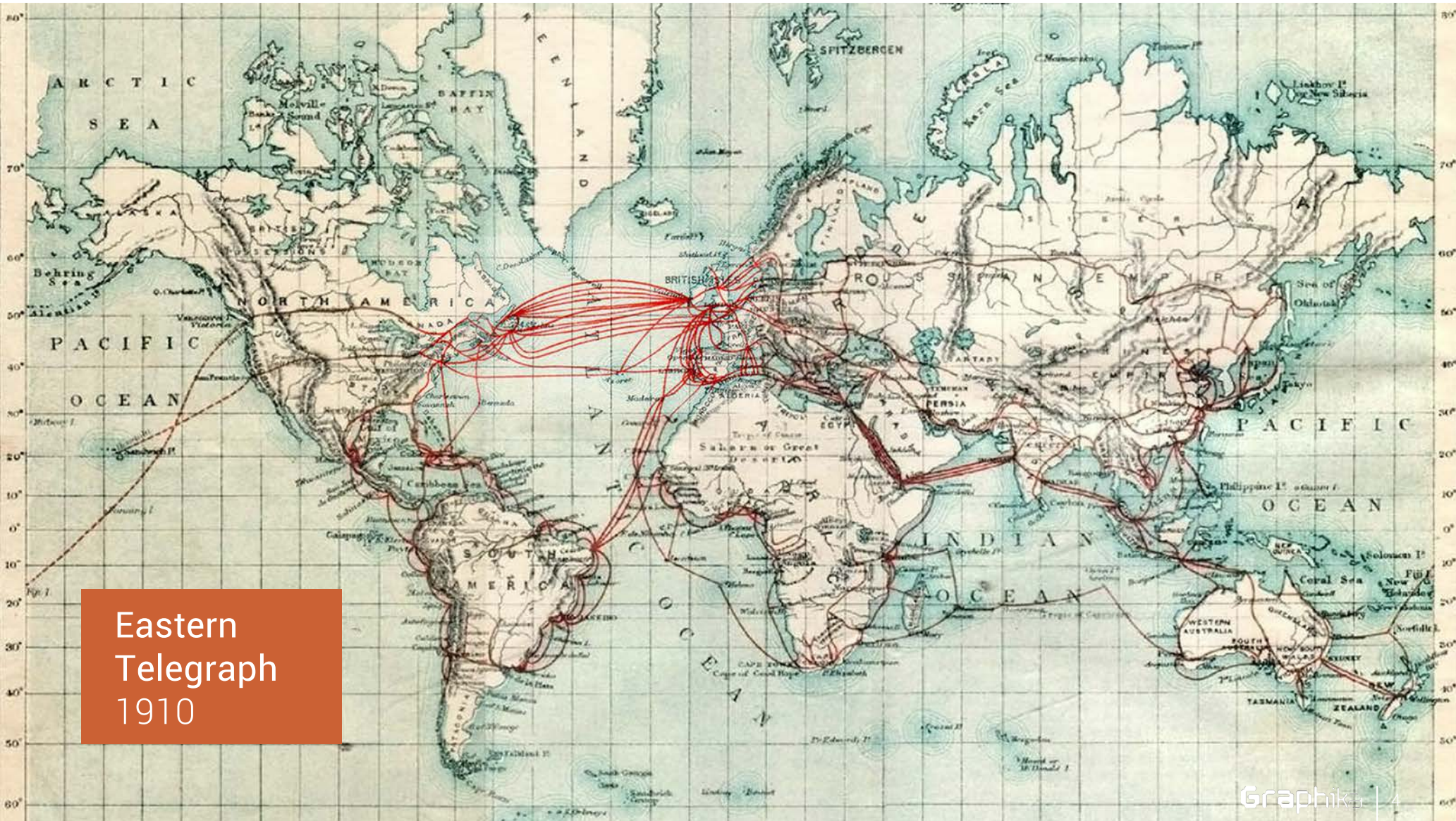


# Why "Graphika?"

Eratosthenes  
(276-195 BCE)



Eastern  
Telegraph  
1910





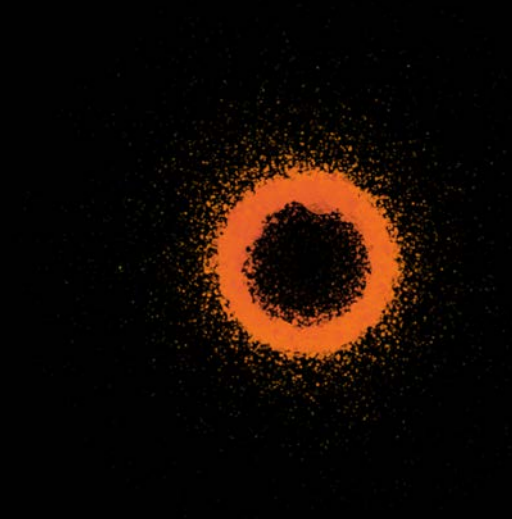


# Global Connectivity: The Cyber-Social Landscape

 2010



Graphika **maps** structural relationships among **social media** actors and **segments** networks based on **patterns** in these relationships, **discovering** the key **communities** of interest and affiliation.





# We Help Clients

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Understand  
Their Audience

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Get Ahead  
of Crisis

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Find Meaningful  
Influencers &  
Advocates

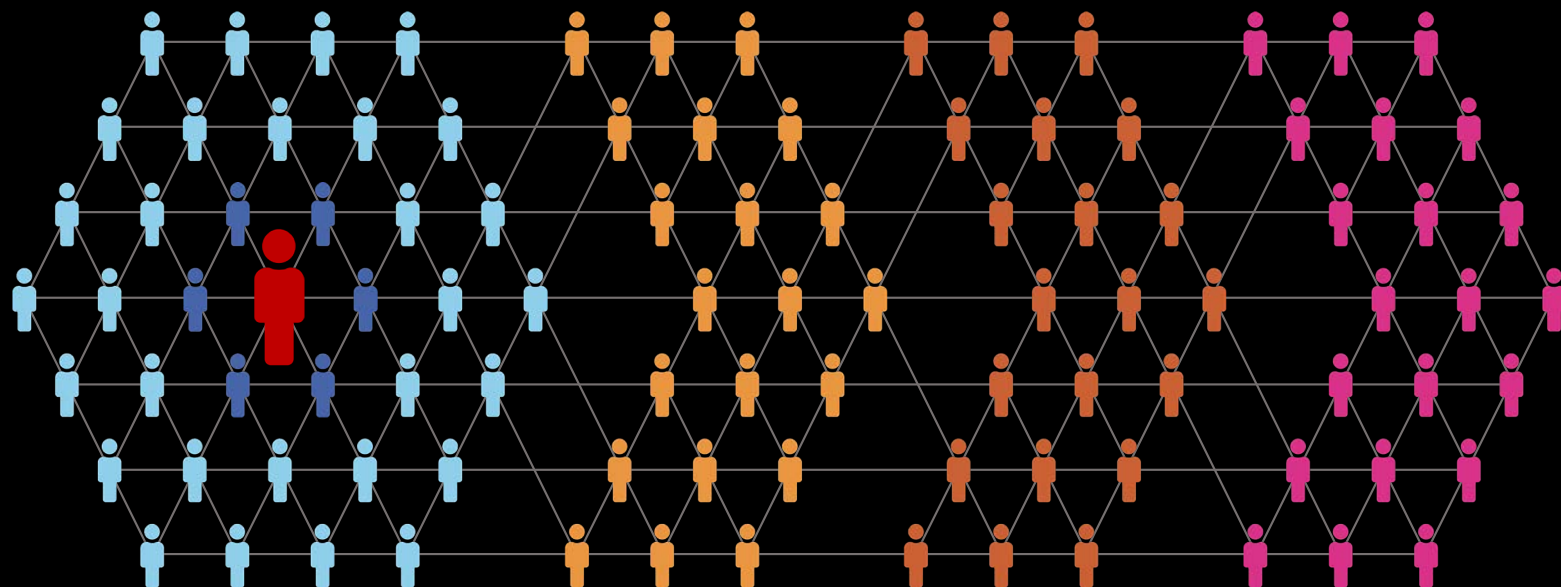
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Measure the  
Impact of  
Campaigns



Individual  
Personal

Universal  
Mass



30

150

2000

"Imagined"

Local Structure  
Strong Ties

Family / Friends / Coworkers / Localities / Networks of Practice / Lifestyle / Social Roles / Politics / Culture

Macro Topology  
Weak

HOUSE   
of CARDS

Pop Culture is a  
gateway into society

keeping up with the  
KARDASHIANS





A woman wearing a vibrant red shawl is captured in a medium shot, speaking into a black microphone. She is looking slightly to her right with a thoughtful expression. Her left hand is held out, palm up, in a gesture of emphasis or openness. The background is a solid, deep teal color. Overlaid on the left side of the image is a thin white vertical line.

Storytelling is essential  
to the human experience

# Stories can strengthen and build communities



Share Stories  
& Uplifting Content



Bring Families  
Together



Share Hope  
& Courage



Connect  
Others Worldwide



# But stories can also be distorted or fabricated

The rise of...



Bots



Trolls



Story Polluters

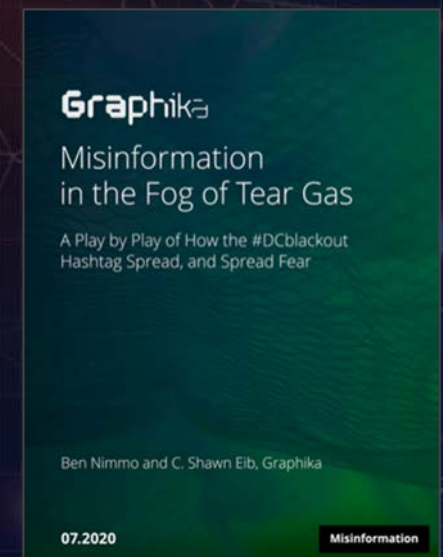
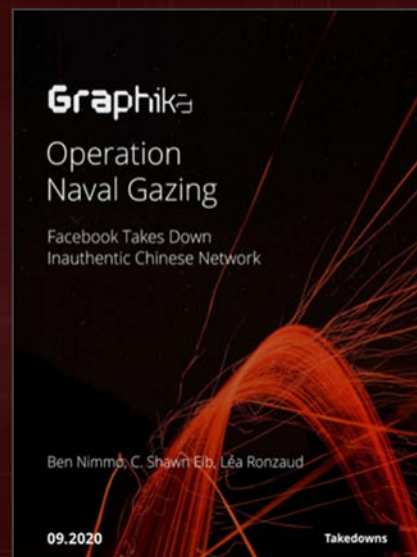


We Inform the  
World's Discourse on  
Network Deception

Graphika DFR Lab  
#OperationFFS:  
Fake Face Swarm  
A Joint Report by Graphika  
& The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensics Lab



# Recent Highlights From Graphika





# Understanding the Key Layers of Digital Deception



Actors



Behavior



Content



# The ABC's of Digital Deception: Three Key Layers

## A Deceptive Actors

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### **Command and Control:**

IRA, GRU, Iran, China, Dark Arts PR, Disinformation for Hire Shops

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Who?

## B Deceptive Behavior

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### **Distribution System:**

Disinformation Armies, Bot Networks, Trolls, Embedded Assets, Alt News Sites, Overt State Outlets

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How?

## C Deceptive Content

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### **Ammunition:**

True Information, Fake News, Memes, Hacked Documents, Cheap Fakes, Deep Fakes, Read Fakes

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What?

# The ABC's of Digital Deception: Three Key Layers

## B Deceptive Behavior

### Distribution System:

Disinformation Armies, Bot Networks, Trolls, Embedded Assets, Alt News Sites, Overt State Outlets

How?

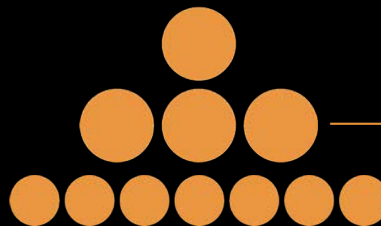




# Anatomy of a Disinformation Army

## Level 3

Embedded assets, integration into organic communities, hybrid human + automated control, integration into offline spectrum of public sphere manipulation

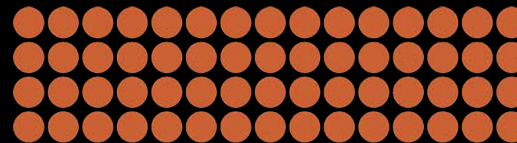


Personas

Bodyguards

## Level 2

Turing-testable automation, crafted profiles, integration into statecraft



Fake Community

## Level 1

"Eggs," baby bots, simple automation, black market accounts

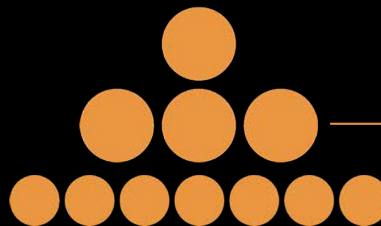


Simple Amplifiers

# Anatomy of a Disinformation Army

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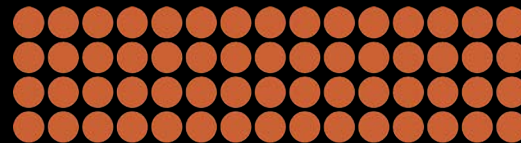


Personas

Bodyguards

## Level 2

Turing-testable automation, crafted profiles, integration into statecraft



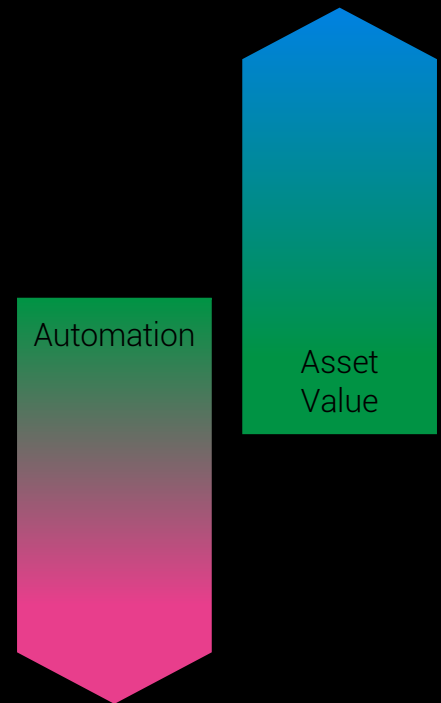
Fake Community

## Level 1

"Eggs," baby bots, simple automation, black market accounts



Simple Amplifiers





# State-Sponsored Disinformation and Inauthentic Behavior

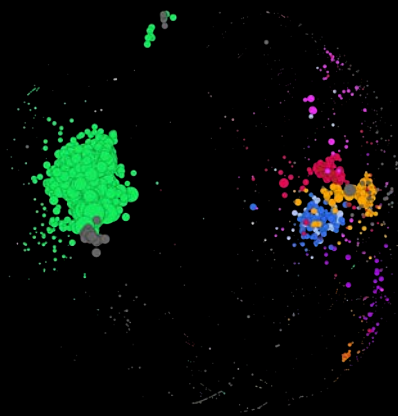
C

"Fake News," Divisive Narratives, memes, hoaxes, pop culture

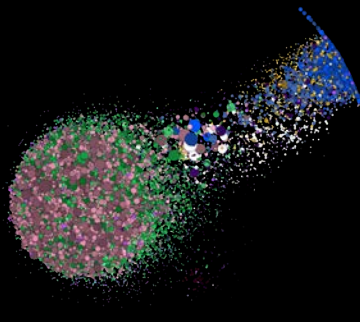
"Fake Leaks," hacked materials packaged and pushed to specific audiences

Topical propaganda, slanted news, and memes targeting specific geopolitical issues

B



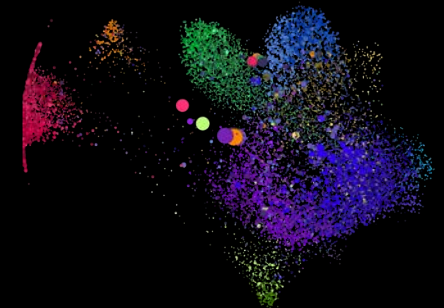
IRA Asset Mentions Network



Podesta Email Leaks



Soros Leaks



Iranian Amplification

A

Russia:  
Internet Research Agency

Russia:  
GRU (Military Intelligence)

Iran:  
Iranian Revolutionary Guard

# A Global Problem with Business Implications

C

Divisive narratives, memes,  
punitive calls to action, pop  
culture

Divisive narratives, memes,  
punitive calls to action, pop  
culture

Conspiracy theories, fake  
science, punitive calls to  
action

Conspiracy theories, fake  
science, health misinformation

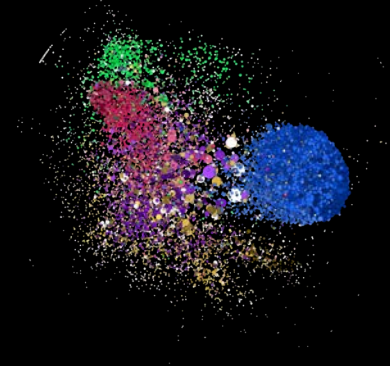
B



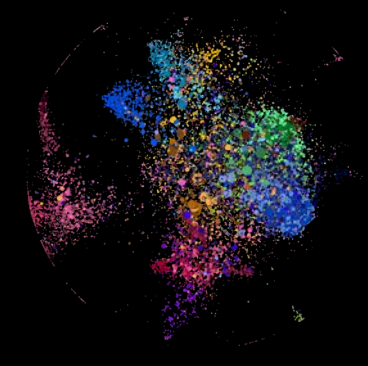
Boycott Nike Issue



NBA | China



Boeing 737 Safety Concerns



5G Mentions

A

Domestic and Foreign  
Political Manipulators

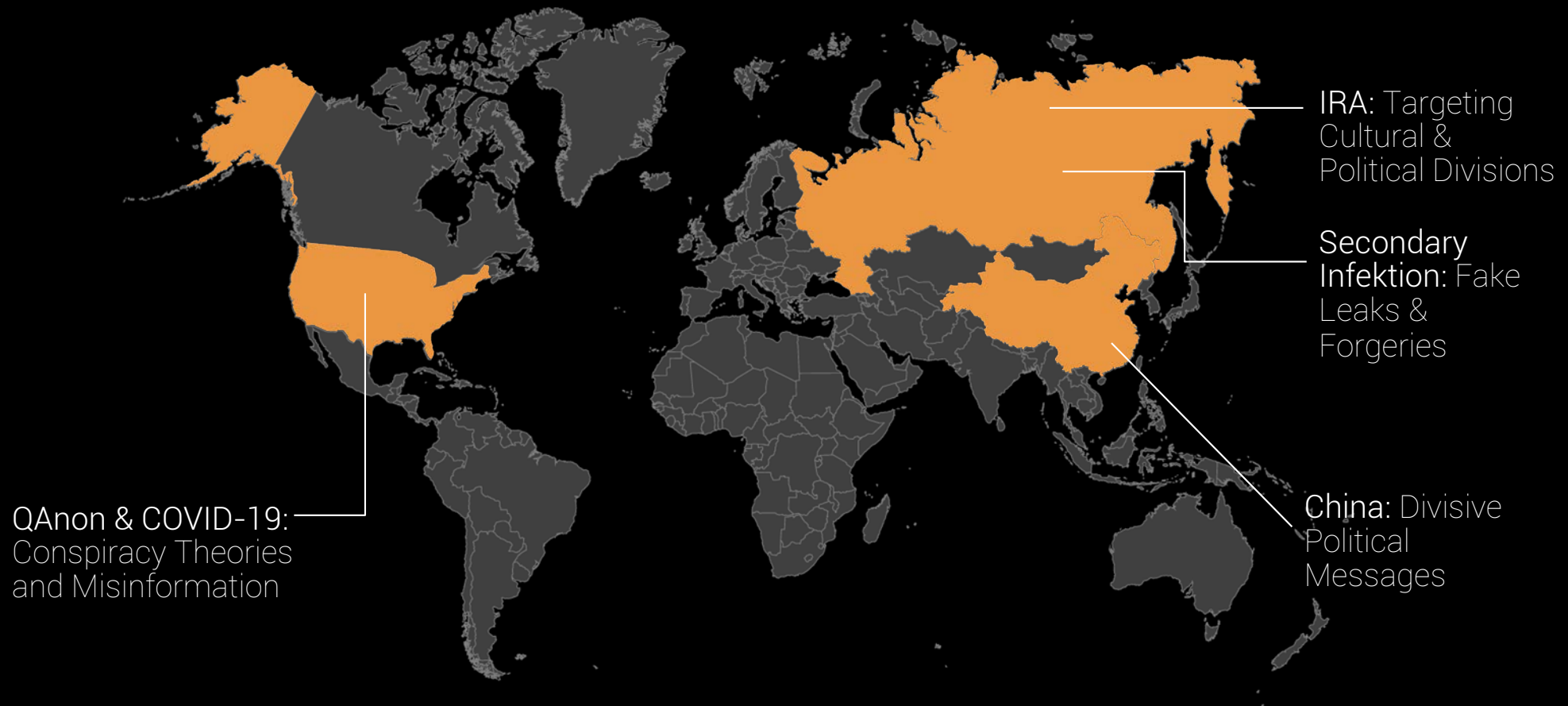
Multiple Domestic and  
Foreign Political  
Manipulators

Probable Multiple State  
Actors and Other  
Manipulators

Russia: "White List"  
Outlets and Amplifiers



# It's Not Just Russia: A Global Network of Disinformation Actors





Russia

# Targeting Cultural Divisions

Internet Research Agency Building



# Russian Accounts Posed As Americans to Target Polarizing Issues Ahead of the 2020 Elections

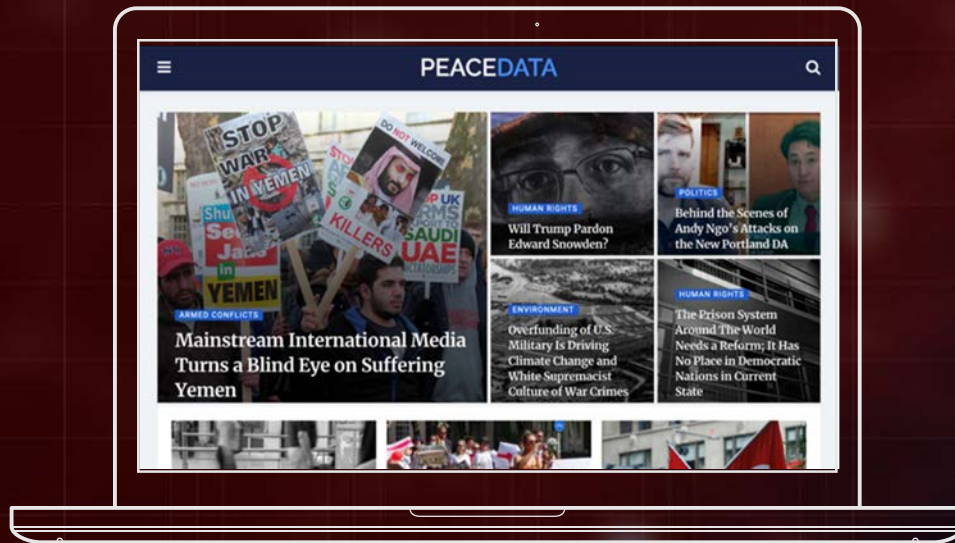
**Graphika**

## The IRACopyPasta Campaign

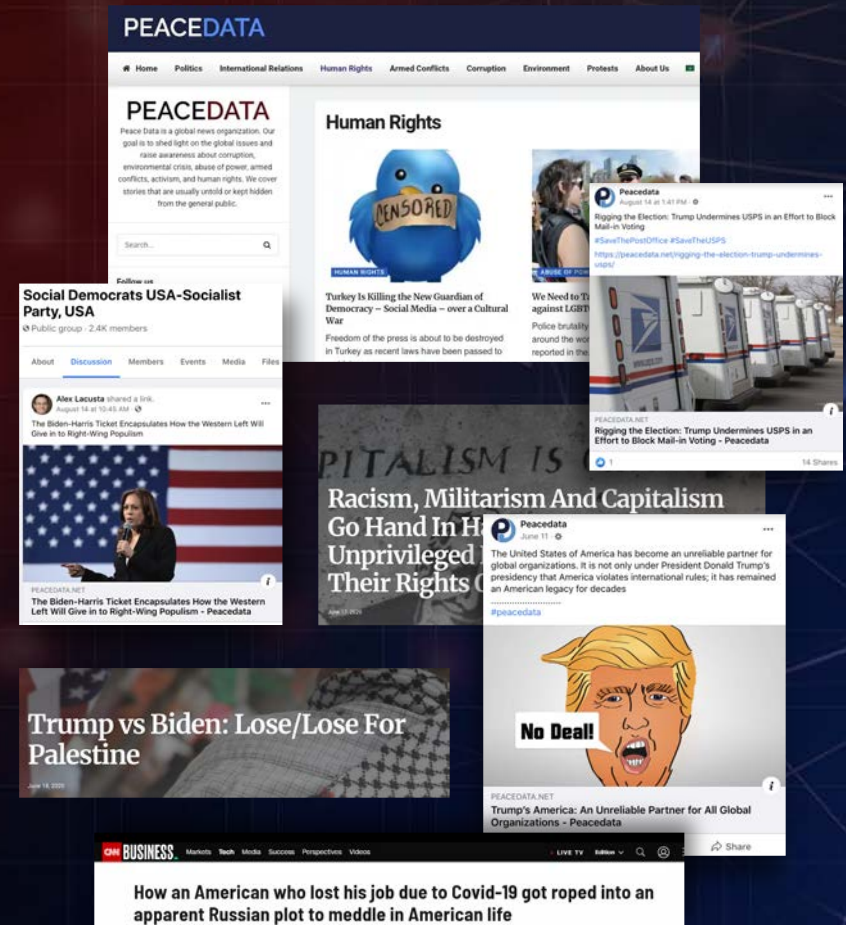
Russian accounts posing as Americans on Instagram targeted both sides of polarizing issues ahead of the 2020 election




# Targeting American Journalists to Engage in US Politics



PeaceData.Net





 Russia

# Secondary Infektion



# Extensive and Coordinated Operation to Create Tensions Between European Countries and the US

□□□


6 Year Campaign



Began in January 2014, extended into early 2020

□□□


2,500 Pieces of Content



Posted at least 2,500 pieces of content in seven languages across over 300 platforms

□□□

Primarily Burners



Most accounts were single-use burners that they abandoned after one post rather than inauthentic but well-developed personas\*

# Information Operations Focused on Nine Main Topics



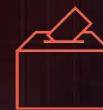
Ukraine as a failed  
or unreliable state



U.S. and NATO aggression  
or interference in other  
countries



European divisions  
and weakness



Elections



Migration  
and Islam



Russia's doping  
scandals in sporting  
competitions



Turkey as an aggressive,  
destabilizing force

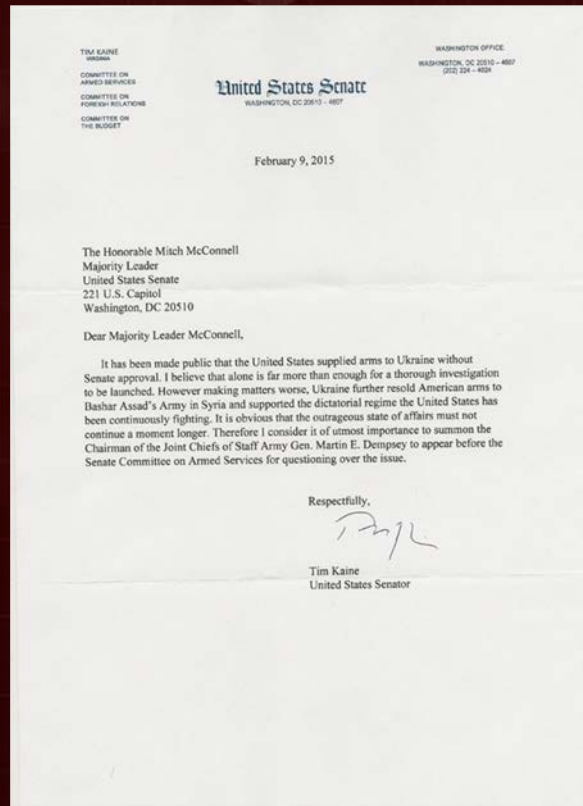


Defending Russia  
and its government



Insulting Kremlin critics  
including Alexei Navalny  
and the Bellingcat  
investigative group

# "Leaks" & Forgeries Exposed Dramatic Geopolitical Scandals



U.S. selling arms to Ukraine which sells them to Assad



Sen. Corker warning Ukraine over "ethnic cleansing"





## Secondary Infektion Events



## World Events

A photograph of Jeremy Corbyn, former leader of the British Labour Party, speaking. He is wearing glasses and a red tie. He is holding a document in his left hand. The document is from the UK-US Trade & Investment Working Group, dated 24-25 July 2017. The text 'Secondary Infektion's Only Home Run?' is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

# Secondary Infektion's Only Home Run?

Former British Labour Party Leader, Jeremy Corbyn



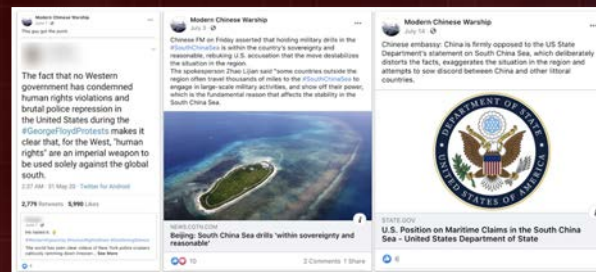
China

# Divisive Political Messages

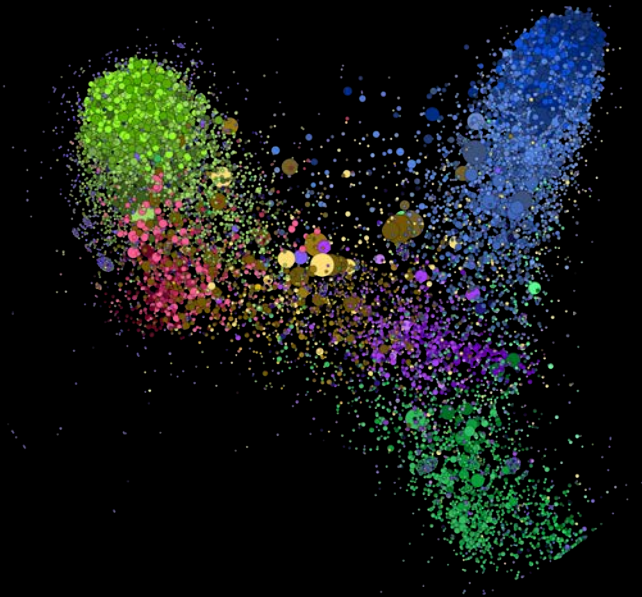
光復香港 時代革命



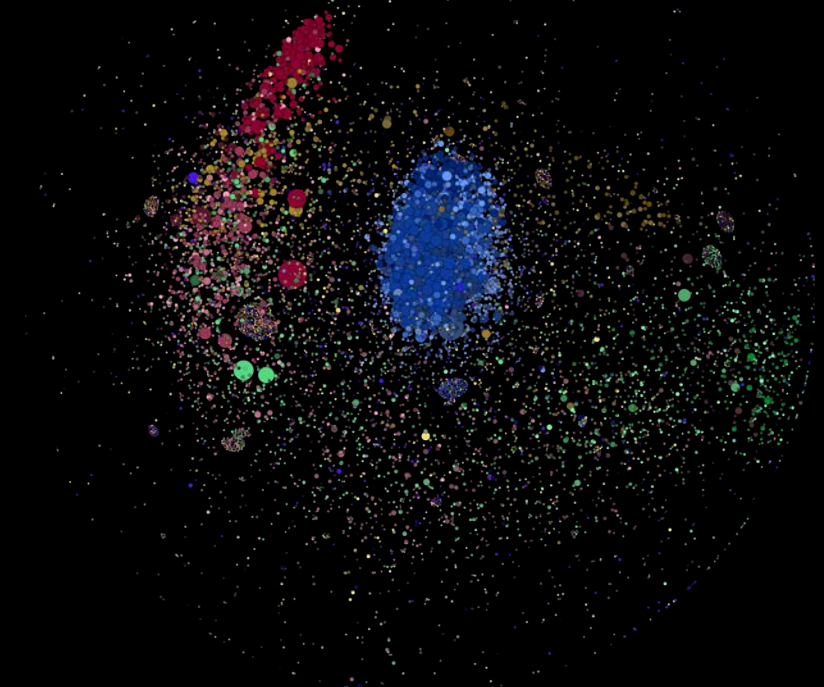
# Overt and Covert Assets Promoting Regional & Geopolitical Issues



# And Targeting American Brands Through Political Messaging



NBA China Issue



Boycott Blizzard Map

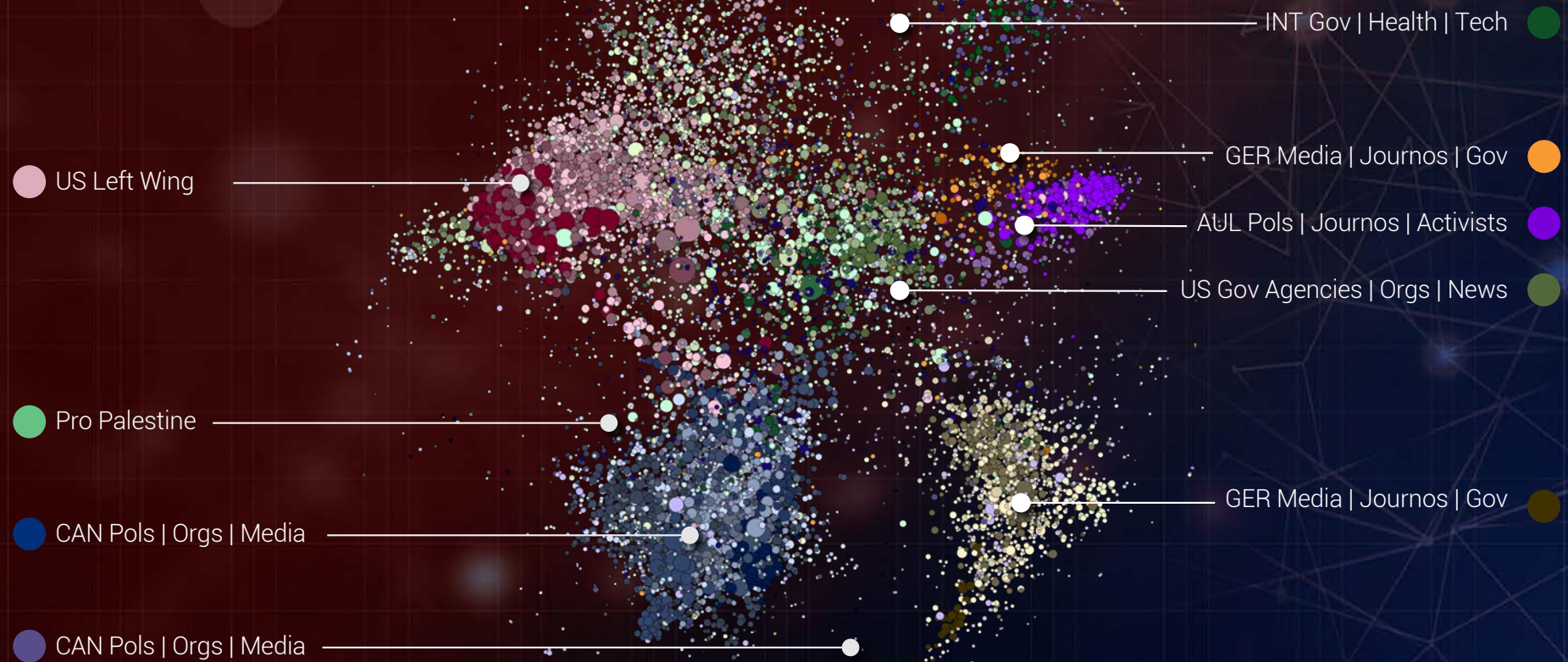


United  
States

# COVID-19 Infodemic



# #FlattenTheCurve Map



*This map represents the conversation around the #FlattenTheCurve hashtag on Twitter. It comprises 12,699 nodes organized into 7 groups and 51 clusters. It spans Feb 29 - Mar 30, 2019*

# COVID-19 Conversation Over Time

March



April



May



June



July



August

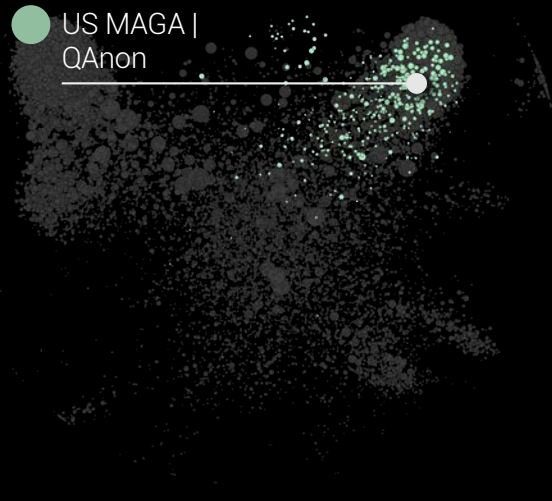


September

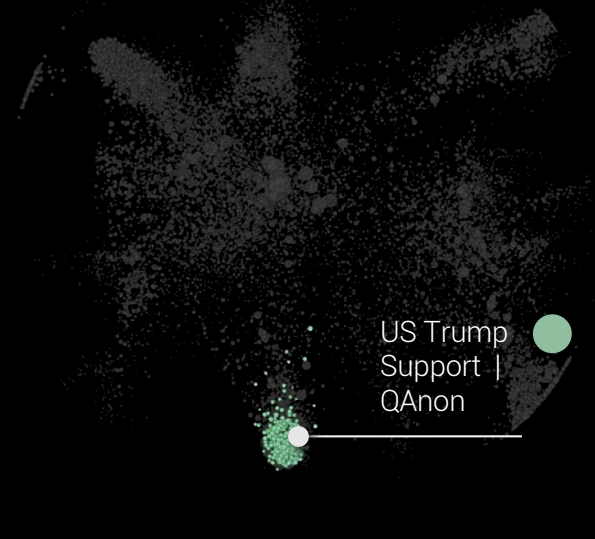


# QAnon Presence in COVID-19 Conversation Over Time

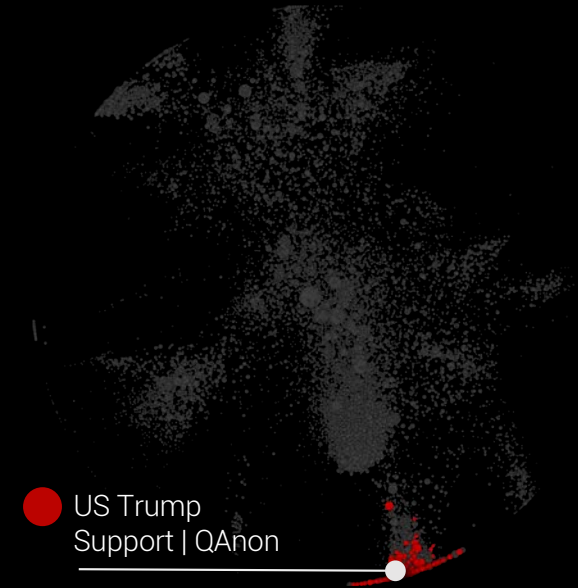
February



April

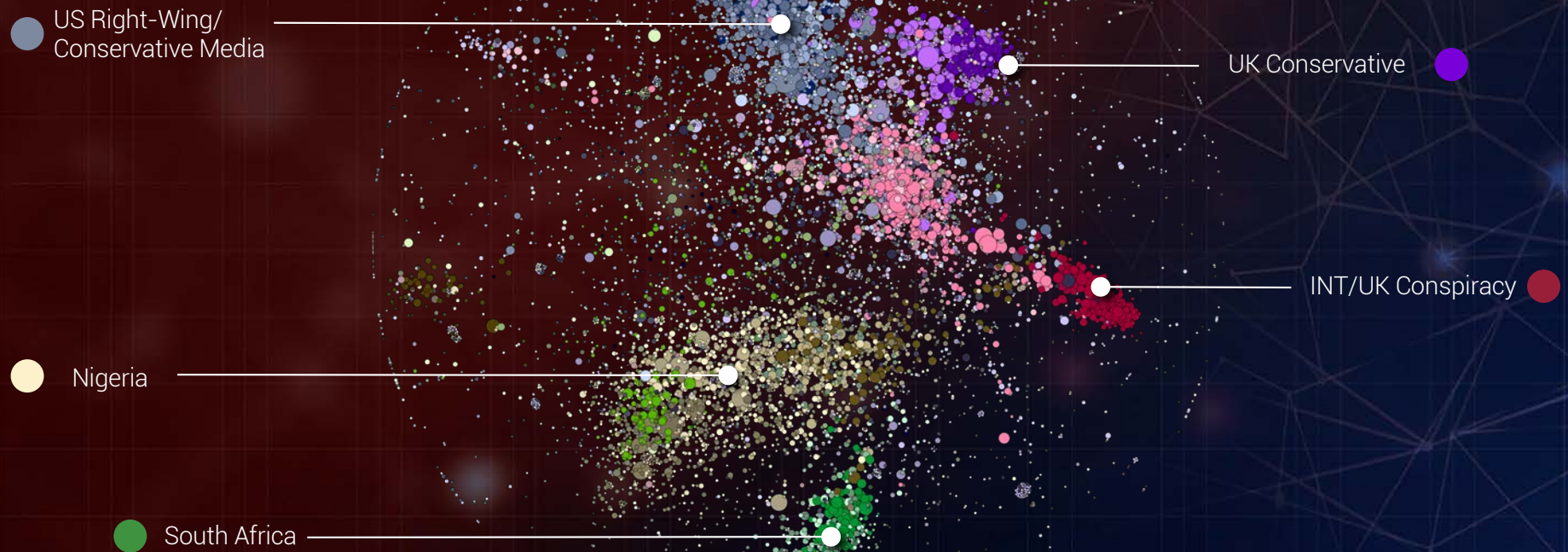


May





# #5G COVID-19 Map



*This map represents the 5G / COVID-19 conversation on Twitter. It comprises 10.1K nodes organized into 7 groups and 52 clusters. It spans Mar 08 - Apr 07, 2019*



# Protecting Storytelling & Authentic Dialog in the Digital Age

A low-angle shot of the American flag waving on a tall pole against a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The flagpole is a dark, cylindrical structure that extends from the bottom left towards the top center. The flag is partially unfurled, showing the stars and stripes. The overall tone is patriotic and clear.

# Disinformation moves beyond elections

Authentic storytelling in human society  
journalism and through the media is  
being disrupted by fake people,  
communities and activity





TOGETHER, WE'RE STRONG.

## We Need: An Ethical Consensus

A social, political, and industry commitment to ***authenticity*** in online behavior, and measurement

And media to adopt “zero trust” policy to evaluate content and ensure it is trustworthy



Graphika



# A Global Tour of Disinformation