



Matt Taibbi @mtaibbi

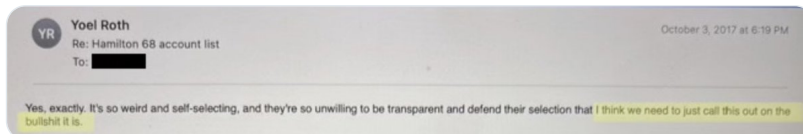
Jan 27 · 43 tweets · [mtaibbi/status/1619029772977455105](https://twitter.com/mtaibbi/status/1619029772977455105)

1.THREAD: Twitter Files #15

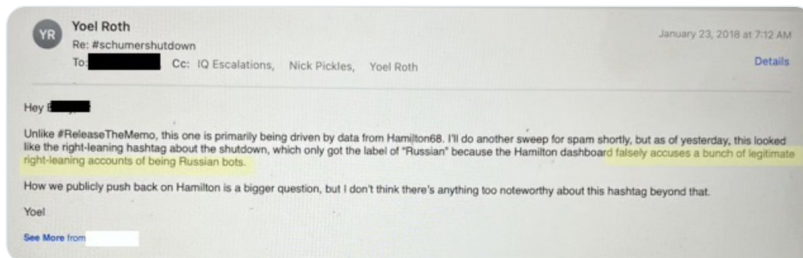
MOVE OVER, JAYSON BLAIR: TWITTER FILES EXPOSE NEXT GREAT MEDIA FRAUD



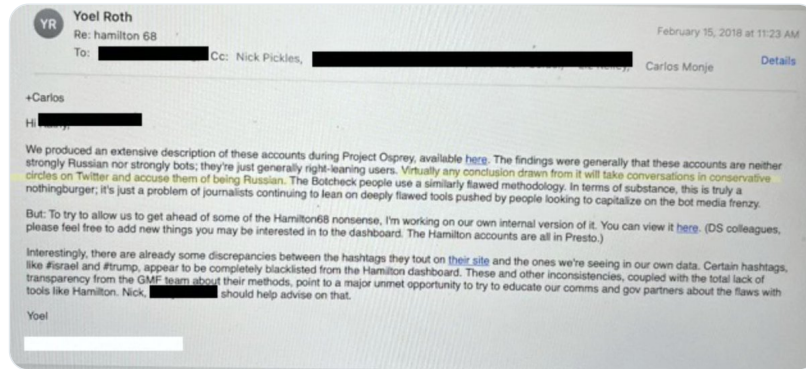
2. "I think we need to just call this out on the bullshit it is."



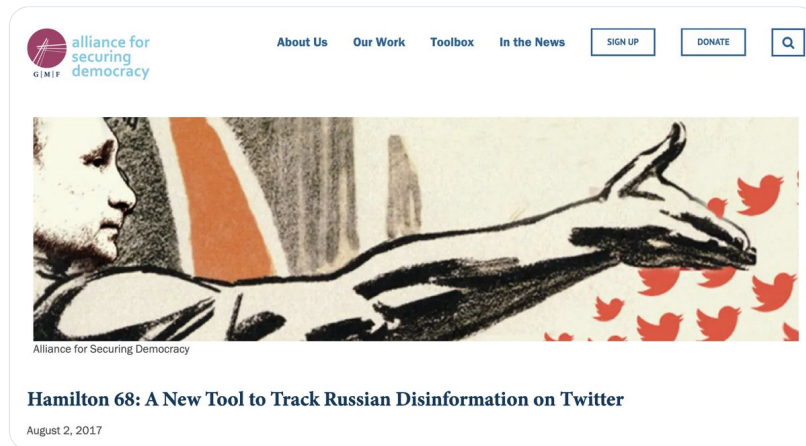
3. "Falsely accuses a bunch of legitimate right-leaning accounts of being Russian bots."



4. “Virtually any conclusion drawn from it will take conversations in conservative circles on Twitter and accuse them of being Russian.”



5. These are quotes by Twitter executives about Hamilton 68, a digital “dashboard” that claimed to track Russian influence and was the source of hundreds if not thousands of mainstream print and TV news stories in the Trump years.



6. The “dashboard” was headed by former FBI counterintelligence official (and current MSNBC contributor) Clint Watts, and funded by a neoliberal think tank, the Alliance for Securing Democracy (ASD).




7. The ASD advisory council includes neoconservative writer Bill Kristol, former Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, ex-Hillary for America chief John Podesta, and former heads or deputy heads of the CIA, NSA, and the Department of Homeland Security.

alliance for securing democracy


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Advisory Council




MIKE CHERTOFF

Mike Chertoff was U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security from 2005 to 2009. There, he worked to strengthen U.S. borders, provide intelligence analysis, and protect infrastructure. He increased the Department's focus on preparedness ahead of disasters, and implemented enhanced security at airports and borders. Following Hurricane Katrina, Chertoff helped to transform FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) into an effective organization. He also served as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals Judge from 2003–05. He co-founded the Chertoff Group, a risk-management and security consulting company, and works as senior of counsel at the Washington, DC law firm Covington & Burling.




TOOMAS IIVESS

Toomas Hendrik Iivess was elected president of the Republic of Estonia in 2006 and in 2011. During his presidency, Iivess was appointed to serve in several high positions in the field of information and communication technology in the European Union. He previously served as minister of foreign affairs and as the ambassador of the Republic of Estonia to the United States and Canada in Washington. Iivess was also a member of the Estonian Parliament, as well as a member of the European Parliament, where he was vice president of the Foreign Affairs Committee. He now co-chairs the World Economic Forum working group The Global Future Council on Blockchain Technology. He is currently a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.




DAVID KRAMER

David J. Kramer joined Florida International University's Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs as a senior fellow in the Vackar Havel Program for Human Rights and Diplomacy in May 2011. Before moving to Miami, Kramer had worked in Washington, DC for 24 years, most recently as senior director for Human Rights and Democracy with the McCain Institute for International Leadership. Before that, he served for four years as president of Freedom House. Prior to that, he was a senior diplomatic fellow at The German Marshall Fund of the United States. Kramer served eight years in the U.S. Department of State during the George W. Bush administration, including as assistant secretary of state for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs, professional staff member in the Secretary's Office of Policy Planning, and senior advisor to the undersecretary for Global Affairs. Kramer is a member of the board of directors of the Halifax International Security Forum and a member of the advisory council for the George W. Bush Presidential Center's Human Freedom Project.




BILL KRISTOL

William Kristol is the editor at large of the influential political journal, The Weekly Standards. Before starting that magazine in 1995, Kristol served in government, first as chief of staff to Secretary of Education William Bennett during the Reagan administration, and then as chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle in the George H. W. Bush administration. Kristol has also served on the board of the Project for the New American Century (1997–2005) and the Foreign Policy Initiative (2009–17). Before coming to Washington in 1985, Kristol taught government at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University.




MIKE MCFAUL

Michael McFaul served for five years in the Obama administration, first as special assistant to the president and senior director for Russian and Eurasian Affairs at the National Security Council at the White House from 2009 to 2012, and then as U.S. ambassador to the Russian Federation from 2012–14. He is currently professor of political science, director, and senior fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, and the Peter and Helen Bing senior fellow at the Hoover Institution. He joined the Stanford faculty in 1995. He is also an adviser to NBC News and a contributing columnist to The Washington Post.



MICHAEL MORELL

Michael Morell was acting director of the Central Intelligence Agency in 2011 and again from 2012 to 2013, and had previously served as deputy director and director for intelligence at the Agency. In his over thirty years at the CIA, Morell played a central role in the United States' fight against terrorism, his initiatives to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and his efforts to respond to trends that are altering the international landscape – including the Arab Spring, the rise of China, and the cyber threat. He was one of the leaders in the search for Osama bin Laden and participated in the deliberations that led to the raid that killed bin Laden in May 2011. He has been with Beacon Global Strategies as a senior consultant since November 2013.



ANA PALACIO


Ana Palacio is an international lawyer specializing in international and European Union law. Ms. Palacio is a Member of the Council of State of Spain and is the Founding Partner of the law and public affairs firm Palacio y Asociados.

Between 1994 and 2002, Ms. Palacio was a Member of the European Parliament, where she chaired the Legal Affairs and Internal Market Committee as well as the Citizens Rights, Justice and Home Affairs Committee. She participated as member of the President of the Convention for the Future of Europe (2002/2003) in the debate and drafting of the European Constitution. In 2002, Ms. Palacio became the first woman to serve as Foreign Affairs Minister of Spain (2002-2004). She was a Member of the Spanish Parliament (2004 to 2006), where she chaired the Joint Committee of the Two Houses for European Union Affairs. She has been Senior Vice-President and General Counsel of the World Bank Group and former General Counsel of ESO (2006-2009), and she has been a member of the Executive Committee and Senior Vice-President for International Affairs of AENA (2008-2009).

She is a member of the Board of Enagás (Spanish gas system), Pharamar (biotechnology), and AEE Power energy infrastructure. She is a member of the International Advisory Boards of Investcorp (a world leading manager of alternative investments) and Office Chelidon (disruptive – “GIG” (refurbish) and of the Governing Council of the Instituto de Empresa (business school). She is a member of the Board as well as of the Executive Committee of the Atlantic Council of the United States. Further, Ms. Palacio serves as member of the External Advisory Board of the US former Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz's Energy Futures Initiative, of the Advisory Board of the Sandra Day O'Connor Justice Prize and of the Board of Trustees of the Institute for Human Sciences. She has recently been appointed as member of the Global Leadership Foundation.

Ms. Palacio publishes regularly in periodicals and journals. In particular, she maintains a monthly column at Project Syndicate. She is a visiting professor at the Edmund S. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. She is also a recurrent participant and speaker at international conferences and fora, most recently giving evidence on good Great Britain and defense cooperation before the UK House of Lords' European Union External Affairs Sub-Committee.

In 2016, Ms. Palacio was presented with the Sandra Day O'Connor Justice Prize for extraordinary contributions to the rule of law, justice and human rights by the O'Connor School of Law at Arizona State University, and was awarded the insignia of Officer of the Order of the Legion of Honor of the French Republic.



JOHN PODESTA

John Podesta served as Chair of Hillary for America. Prior to joining Hillary Clinton's campaign he served as Counselor to President Barack Obama.

In 2008, he served as co-chair of President Obama's transition team, where he coordinated the priorities of the incoming administration's agenda, oversee the development of its policies, and spearheaded its appointments of major cabinet secretaries and political appointees.

He is the former Chair of the Washington, D.C.-based think tank Center for American Progress and the Center for American Progress Action Fund. Prior to founding the Center in 2003, Podesta served as White House Chief of Staff to President William J. Clinton.

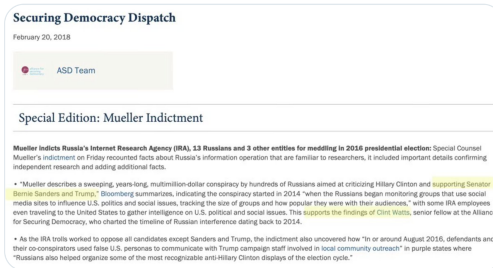
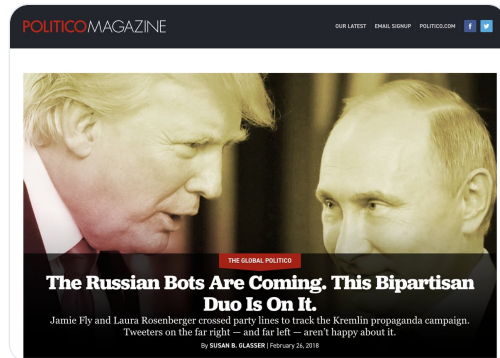
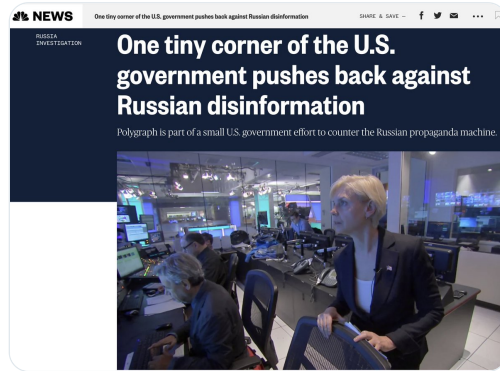
He also recently served on the President's Global Development Council and the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Additionally, Podesta has held numerous positions on Capitol Hill, including counselor to Democratic Leader Sen. Thomas A. Daschle (1995-1999).

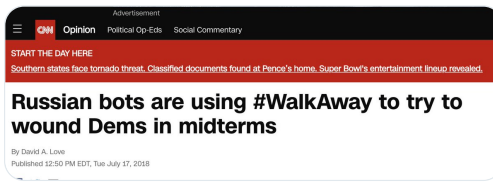
A Chicago native, Podesta is a graduate of Knox College and the Georgetown University Law Center, where he is currently a visiting professor of law.

He is the author of The Power of Progress: How America's Progressives Can (Once Again) Save Our Economy, Our Climate and Our Country.

8. News outlets for years cited Watts and Hamilton 68 when claiming Russian bots were “amplifying” an endless parade of social media causes – against strikes in Syria, in support of Fox host Laura Ingraham, the campaigns of both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders.



9. Hamilton 68 was the source for stories claiming Russian bots pushed terms like “deep state” or hashtags like [#FireMcMaster](#), [#SchumerShutdown](#), [#WalkAway](#), [#ReleaseTheMemo](#), [#AlabamaSenateRace](#), and [#ParklandShooting](#), among many others.




10. The secret ingredient to Hamilton 68's analytical method? A list: "Our analysis has linked 600 Twitter accounts to Russian influence activities online," was how the site put it at launch.

Hamilton 68 Dashboard Launches Today

MEDIA ADVISORY
August 2, 2017

A New Tool to Track Russian Disinformation on Twitter




HAMILTON 68
A DASHBOARD TRACKING RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA ON TWITTER
<http://dashboard.securingsdemocracy.org/>

asd

So, What is This Tool Exactly? | J.M. Berger, Laura Rosenberger
In the Federalist Papers No. 68, Alexander Hamilton wrote of protecting America's electoral process from foreign meddling. Today, we face foreign interference of a type Hamilton could scarcely have imagined. The **Hamilton 68** dashboard, a project with the Alliance for Securing Democracy at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, seeks to expose the effects of online influence networks and inform the public of themes and content being promoted to Americans through a near real-time look at Russian propaganda and disinformation efforts online.


[READ MORE](#)

What is the Hamilton 68 Dashboard Monitoring?



The top of the dashboard shows tweets from Russia's overt propaganda outlets in English, and a short post discussing the themes of the day. But these disinformation networks also include bots and trolls, and our analysis has linked 600 Twitter accounts to Russian influence activities online. The lower section of the dashboard features topics, hashtags, and links currently promoted by this network.

How Current is the Hamilton 68 Dashboard?



The automated monitoring updates continuously throughout the day, with a five minute lag to real time. The "top themes" will update in the morning, and case studies, infographics, and other materials will be added in the coming weeks and months. You can sign up for alerts and emails about **Hamilton 68** dashboard updates (and other updates on the Alliance for Securing Democracy) [here](#).

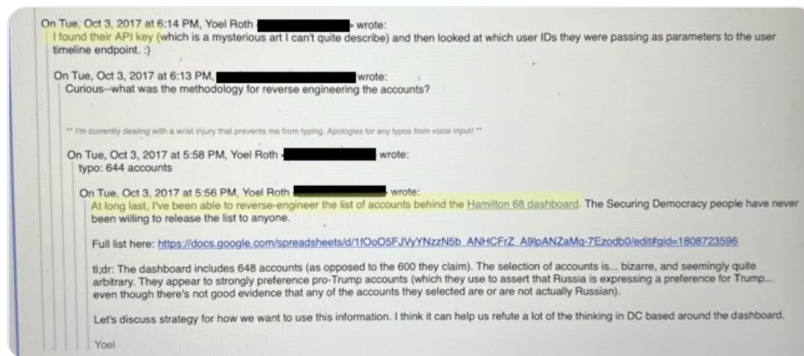
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11. Hamilton 68 never released the list, claiming "the Russians will simply shut [the accounts] down." All those reporters and TV personalities making claims about "Russian bots" never really knew what they were describing.

For what it's worth, Rosenberger and Fly disclose their methodology on their website and say they can't reveal the list of the 600 accounts they are following or the Russians will simply shut them down. Other researchers with whom I've spoken say the tweets and messages found by Hamilton 68 certainly are consistent with what they've seen from Russian-linked accounts. Rosenberger, who spent years in the Obama White House and State Department, laughs at the idea she's a neocon plant, though it is true that their advisory board contains both liberal Russia experts like former Obama Ambassador to Moscow Mike McFaul as well as a favorite Greenwald bête noire, the original neocon Bill Kristol.

12. Twitter executives were in a unique position to recreate Hamilton's list, reverse-engineering it from the site's requests for Twitter data.

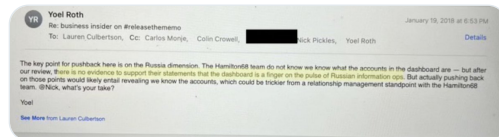
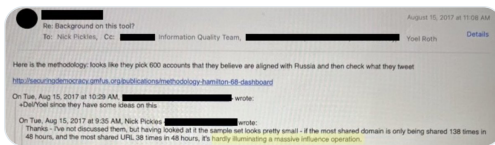
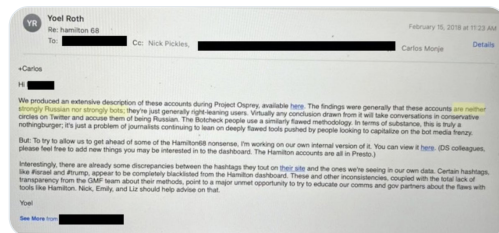
Concerned about the deluge of Hamilton-based news stories, they did so – and what they found shocked them.



13. "These accounts," they concluded, "are neither strongly Russian nor strongly bots."

"No evidence to support the statement that the dashboard is a finger on the pulse of Russian information ops."

"Hardly illuminating a massive influence operation."

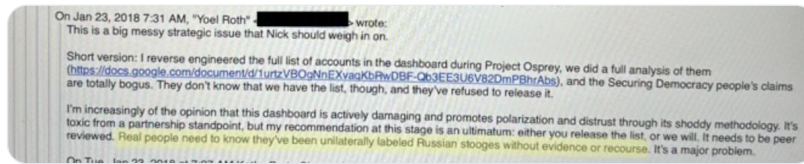


14. In layman's terms, the Hamilton 68 barely had any Russians. In fact, apart from a few RT accounts, it's mostly full of ordinary Americans, Canadians, and British.

15. It was a scam. Instead of tracking how "Russia" influenced American attitudes, Hamilton 68 simply collected a handful of mostly real, mostly American accounts, and described their organic conversations as Russian scheming.

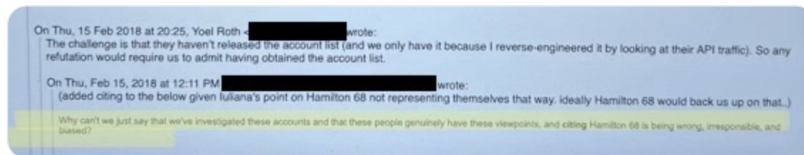
16. Twitter immediately recognized these Hamilton-driven news stories posed a major ethical problem, potentially implicating them.

“Real people need to know they’ve been unilaterally labeled Russian stooges without evidence or recourse,” Roth wrote.



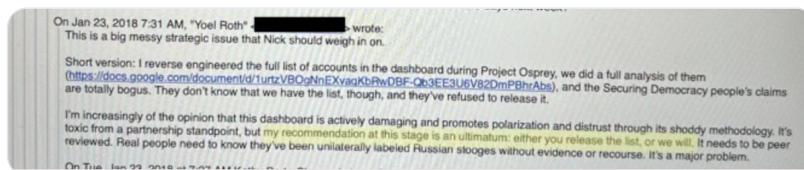
17. Some Twitter execs badly wanted to out Hamilton 68. After Russians were blamed for hyping the [#ParklandShooting](#) hashtag, one wrote:

“Why can’t we say we’ve investigated... and citing Hamilton 68 is being wrong, irresponsible, and biased?”

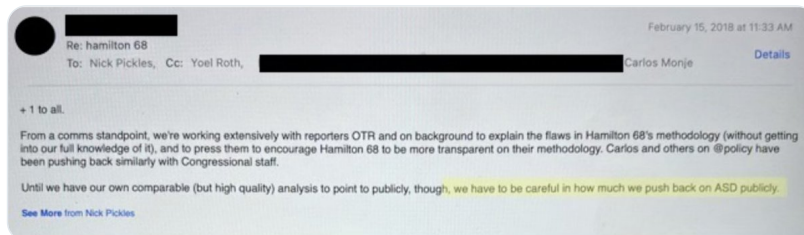


18. Yoel Roth wanted a confrontation. “My recommendation at this stage is an ultimatum: you release the list or we do,” he wrote.

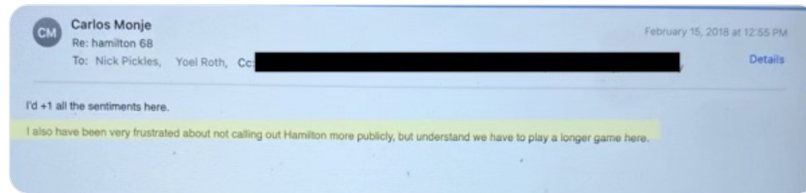
However, there were internal concerns about taking on the politically connected Alliance for Securing Democracy.



19. “We have to be careful in how much we push back on ASD publicly,” said future White House and NSC spokesperson Emily Horne.



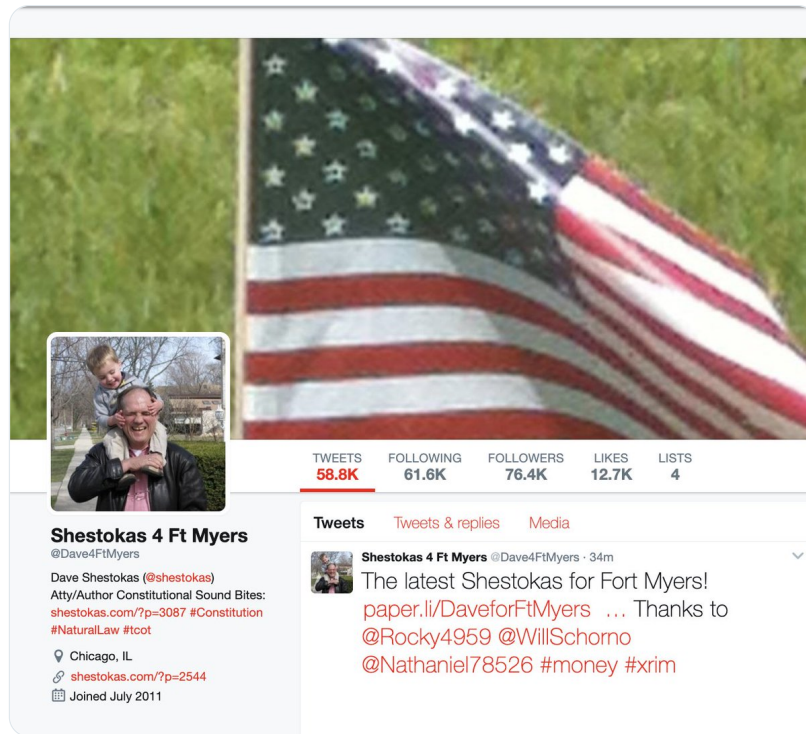
20. “I also have been very frustrated in not calling out Hamilton 68 more publicly, but understand we have to play a longer game here,” wrote Carlos Monje, the future senior advisor to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.



21. So the “legitimate people,” as one Twitter exec called them, never found out they’d been used as fodder for mountains of news stories about “Russian influence.” Because the [#TwitterFiles](#) contain the list, they’ve begun finding out.

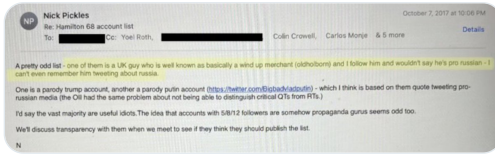
22. “I’m shocked,” says Sonia Monsour, who as a child lived through civil war in Lebanon. “Supposedly in a free world, we are being watched at many levels, by what we say online.”

23. “I’ve written a book about the U.S. Constitution,” says Chicago-based lawyer Dave Shestokas. “How I made a list like this is incredible to me.”



24. “When I was growing up, my father told me about the McCarthyite blacklist,” says Oregon native Jacob Levich. “As a child it would never have occurred to me that this would come back, in force and broadly, in a way... designed to undermine rights we hold dear.”

25. Even Twitter execs were stunned to read who was on the list. Wrote policy chief Nick Pickles about British comic [@Holbornlolz](#): “A wind-up merchant... I follow him and wouldn’t say he’s pro-Russian... I can’t even remember him tweeting about Russia.”



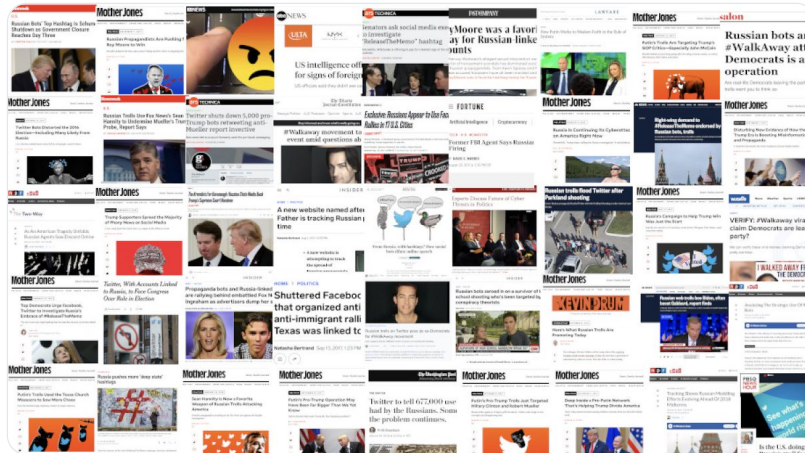
26. I’m listed as a foreign bot?” said conservative media figure Dennis Michael Lynch. “As a proud taxpaying citizen, charitable family man, and honest son of a U.S. Marine, I deserve better. We all do!”



27. Consortium editor Joe Lauria too was angered to find he was on the list, which targeted voices across the spectrum: “Organizations like Hamilton 68 are in business to enforce an official narrative, which means excising inconvenient facts, which they call ‘misinformation.’”



28. What makes this an important story is the sheer scale of the news footprint left by Hamilton 68's digital McCarthyism. The quantity of headlines and TV segments dwarfs the impact of individual fabulists like Jayson Blair or Stephen Glass.



29. Hamilton 68 was used as a source to assert Russian influence in an astonishing array of news stories: support for Brett Kavanaugh or the Devin Nunes memo, the Parkland shooting, manipulation of black voters, “attacks” on the Mueller investigation...

Russia is attempting to influence Mueller investigation in an 'ongoing attack,' Democrats say

Published Tue, Jan 23 2019-1:11 PM EST | Updated Wed, Jan 24 2019-10:17 AM EST

Kevin Browninger @KEVINWILLIAMS

KEY POINTS

- California Democrats Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Rep. Adam Schiff released a letter to the CEOs of Twitter and Facebook warning of possible Russian influence on the special counsel's investigation.
- A website monitoring Russia-linked Twitter accounts found that their use of #ReleaseTheMemo increased nearly 300,000 percent in just a few days.

OBSERVER

POLITICS


Russian Propagandists Seize Kavanaugh Controversy to Sow Division Online

All the while, accounts connected from a list of Russian-linked Twitter handles...

The New York Times

After Florida School Shooting, Russian 'Bot' Army Pounced

Give this article 996



A weekend gun control rally in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. One hour after news of the school shooting in nearby Parkland spread, Twitter accounts that researchers have linked to Russia shifted their focus to the gun control debate. Saul Martinez for The New York Times

Hamilton 68 dashboard

Accounts tracked by the Hamilton 68 dashboard seized on key partisan issues ahead of the U.S. midterms. Early in the week, accounts promoted the "Black Lives Matter" movement, encouraging black voters to leave the Democratic Party, spreading several articles that falsely claimed Kanye West designed merchandise for the movement. "Black" remained one of the top hashtags on the dashboard for the duration of the week. Pro-Kremlin accounts also sought to inflame the immigration debate by promoting articles falsely alleging that a second, heavily armed migrant caravan was headed towards the U.S. border.


30. These stories raised fears in the population, and most insidious of all, were used to smear people like Tulsi Gabbard as foreign “assets,” and drum up sympathy for political causes like Joe Biden’s campaign by describing critics as Russian-aligned.

NEWS

DECISION 2020 President State results Senate House 2022 Midterm calendar

Russian web trolls boo Biden, often boost Gabbard, report finds

For Russia, Biden is to 2020 what Hillary Clinton was to 2016, researchers from the Foreign Policy Research Institute say in a new report.




MSNBC

NEWS

Russia's propaganda machine discovers 2020 Democratic candidate Tulsi Gabbard

Experts who track websites and social media linked to Russia have seen stirrings of a possible campaign of support for Hawaii Democrat Tulsi Gabbard.



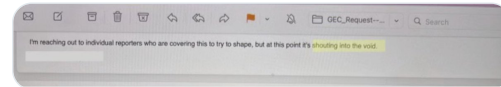
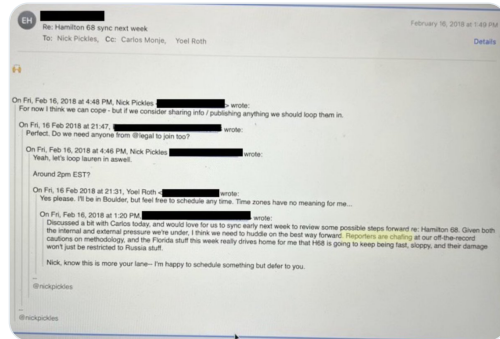
31. Incredibly, and ironically, these stories were also frequently used as evidence of the spread of “fake news” on sites like Twitter:



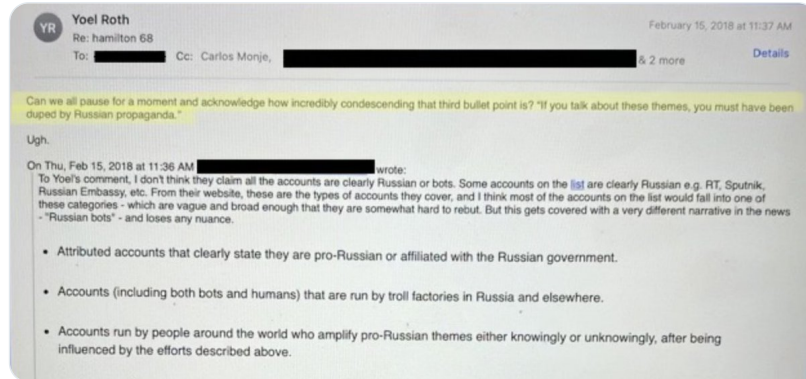
32. It was a lie. The illusion of Russian support was created by tracking people like Joe Lauria, Sonia Monsour, and Dave Shestokas. Virtually every major American news organization cited these fake tales— even fact-checking sites like Snopes and Politifact.



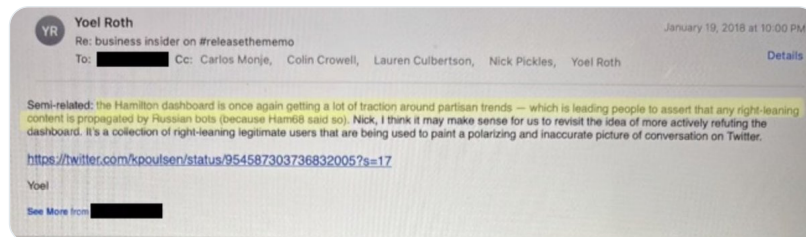
33. Twitter didn't have the guts to out Hamilton 68 publicly but did try to speak to reporters off the record. “Reporters are chafing,” said Horne. “It’s like shouting into a void.”



34. Roth was offended by the idea that tweets on certain themes suggested subversion. “Can we talk about how incredibly condescending...? If you talk about these themes, you must have been duped by Russian propaganda.”



35. Again, even Roth, like most Twitter execs an ardent Democratic partisan, saw that the Hamilton scheme would lead people “to assert that any right-leaning content is propagated by Russian bots.”



36. At least two other research institutions that used similar methodologies – and were cited as sources in news stories – were also criticized in Twitter email correspondence.

37.MSNBC, Watts, the Washington Post, Politico, Mother Jones (which did at least 14 Hamilton 68 stories), the Alliance for Securing Democracy, and the offices of politicians like Dianne Feinstein all refused comment, unless this counts:

Matt Taibbi @mtaibbi · 3h

Question for @michaeljmorell @billkristol @selectedwisdom @ilvestoomas @mcfaul @anapalacio @johnpodesta et al:

Are you really going to no-comment my upcoming story about Hamilton 68 and @SecureDemocracy? I have the list. Time to come clean.

223 1,032 4,152 435.4K

Alliance for Securing Democracy @SecureDemocracy

Replying to @mtaibbi

You can find information describing Hamilton 68's methodology, published in 2017 and 2018, here:

1 securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/the-methodolog...

38.This was an academic scandal as well, as Harvard, Princeton, Temple, NYU, GWU, and other universities promoted Hamilton 68 as a source:



The Russian disinformation strategy in 2018

The U.S. government, the single government agency entrusted the authority of what was going on or assumed responsibility for addressing it. The major social media platform investigated the security of the message and that message became invisible.

Victim Profiles, Dianne Poytalis

The Allies believe that the Russian disinformation strategy is a multi-pronged effort to undermine the U.S. government and its institutions. The strategy is designed to create a sense of confusion and uncertainty among the American public, and to undermine the trust in the U.S. government and its institutions. The strategy is designed to create a sense of confusion and uncertainty among the American public, and to undermine the trust in the U.S. government and its institutions.

Profile of a Russian Troll Factory

Category	Details
Founding	2014, Russia
Location	St. Petersburg, Russia
Number of employees	100-200
Primary activities	Disinformation, propaganda, social media manipulation
Primary clients	Government, political groups, media outlets
Primary methods	Bot networks, fake accounts, coordinated inauthentic activity
Primary goals	Disrupting democratic processes, undermining trust in institutions

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2018 United States Elections

Links to calendars, results, polls and issues in congressional and state elections in 2018.

Get Started Russian interference in the 2018 United States elections

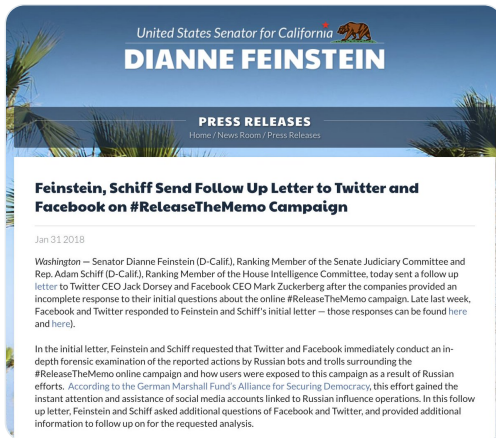
- Tracking Russian influence operations on Twitter
- The Hamilton 68 dashboard, a project with the Alliance for Securing Democracy at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, seeks to expose the effects of online influence networks and inform the public of themes and content being promoted to Americans by foreign powers.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Meet Politico

Shapiro: Tracking and reacting to Russian attacks on democracy

39. Perhaps most embarrassingly, elected officials promoted the site, and invited Hamilton “experts” to testify. Dianne Feinstein, James Lankford, Richard Blumenthal, Adam Schiff, and Mark Warner were among the offenders.



40. The mix of digital McCarthyism and fraud did great damage to American politics and culture. News outlets that don't disavow these stories, or still pay Hamilton vets as analysts, shouldn't be trusted. Every subscriber to those outlets to write to editors about the issue.

41. For more from the [#TwitterFiles](#), follow [@bariweiss](#), [@lhfang](#), [@ShellenbergerMD](#), [@TheFP](#), and others. Twitter had no input into this story. Searches were conducted by a third party, so material may have been left out.

42. For more on this story, read the detailed new story at [racket.news](#)

And a special thanks to [@orf](#) for putting together video for this segment - much more to come.

...