Holocaust Distortion and Denial Content Spreads Through Diffuse Accounts and Fringe Authors, Despite Platform Moderation
SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Authors of Holocaust Denial and Distortion (HDD) material act alone or in very small groups to propagate HDD content online. As a result, its dissemination patterns are muted compared to large-scale coordination campaigns, especially those propagated by state-sponsored or mainstream actors.[1] In this report, GEC sought to characterize the nature of HDD content transmission on Telegram, Twitter, and VK in 12 languages during a nine-month period in 2022. Account interactivity, text similarity, and image similarity analysis revealed that accounts producing HDD content often refrained from tagging others in their HDD-specific posts or forwarding, retweeting, or co-posting other accounts' HDD content. Moreover, very few official or state-sponsored accounts or their proxies were active in this conversation, nor did HDD content penetrate mainstream social media discourse or generate much engagement. The limited interactivity among HDD-producing accounts is likely due to platform content moderation and accounts' desires to avoid detection and suspension.

Despite these trends, isolated examples of HDD content amplification and coordinated production exist, with meaningful differences evident across platforms. For example, we found inorganic amplification of HDD content by inauthentic accounts on VK but virtually none on Twitter. In addition, while multiple accounts routinely shared common images on Telegram, this pattern was not evident elsewhere. This cross-platform variation is likely due to differences in platforms' content moderation policies, and practices and inherent differences in platform characteristics. These findings are detailed throughout the following report along with other illustrative examples of HDD dissemination patterns and tactics to modulate HDD distribution and conceal account interactivity.

KEY FINDINGS

- GEC examined more than 71,400 posts published in 12 languages between 1 January and 30 September 2022 on Telegram, Twitter, and VK.
- On Telegram, Twitter, and VK, accounts rarely mentioned other handles in their HDD-related posts; yet there were varying degrees of coordination amplifying HDD content across all three platforms.
- Despite publishing the most egregious HDD content, Telegram's HDD producers seldom mentioned each other in their posts or amplified one another's content. The network of activity was therefore highly fragmented and participation by state-sponsored accounts was almost non-existent.
- HDD content on Twitter was rarely amplified; we found no dissemination networks, state-sponsored accounts, or coordinated campaigns. Twitter's ability and inclination to maintain Terms of Service enforcement may have contributed to these outcomes.
- VK users publishing HDD content seldom mentioned each other in their posts. Activity on the platform was defined by inorganic amplification of posts through shares by groups of accounts and, to a lesser extent, co-posting. Participation by state-sponsored accounts was non-existent.

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BACKGROUND & RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In the first report in this series, GEC surveyed the information environment for the presence of HDD content online.[1] That report found considerable variation among the volume and nature of HDD content across social and digital media platforms, in large part due to vast differences in content moderation policies and practices instituted by the range of platforms analyzed. In this second report, GEC focused on the dissemination patterns of HDD and HDD-adjacent content on Telegram, Twitter, and VK, the three text-based social media platforms where we identified the most HDD content in the initial report.[2, 3] Specifically, we set out to characterize the network of actors in the HDD conversation with the following questions in mind:

- How interactive are accounts that produce and share HDD content?
- Do official or state-sponsored accounts and their proxies play a role in HDD production and amplification?
- If not, does this content eventually make its way into mainstream discourse?

Separately, we sought to characterize how organic the spread of HDD content appears on these platforms, asking the question: do human or automated accounts coordinate the dissemination of HDD and HDD-adjacent content?

METHODOLOGY

To address these questions, we used and expanded upon the data we collected for our initial analysis. For Telegram, Twitter, and VK, we combined our original dataset (spanning from 1 January to 15 July 2022) with data from between 16 July to 30 September that was collected according to the same Boolean keyword statement in the same eight languages using the same previously used data collection tools. We then translated the Boolean statement into four additional languages—Bosnian, Hungarian, Serbian, and Turkish—and collected data in those languages for the totality of the analysis period (1 January to 30 September). In total, we identified 8,855 Telegram posts, 59,942 tweets, and 2,647 VK posts that were published in the 12 languages during the first nine months of 2022.[4, 5] Of note, all Twitter data was collected before the platform became privately owned on 27 October 2022.

We then utilized in-house technology to map out networks of interactivity among accounts based on the explicit mentions of other accounts, users, or channels within posts for each of the three expanded datasets. We also analyzed the degree of text and image similarity on every combination of post in each dataset, and the timing of the production of similar or identical posts. This information facilitated our ability to characterize the extent of coordination within each conversation.

REPORT

CROSS-PLATFORM ANALYSIS

On Telegram, Twitter, and VK, accounts rarely mentioned other handles in their HDD-related posts; yet, there were varying degrees of coordination amplifying HDD content across the three platforms. A large share of VK content was likely intentionally amplified by inauthentic accounts (those that are artificially operated and attempt to deceive users into thinking they represent real people). By contrast, coordination on Telegram was sparse (relegated to low-volume activity); there was no coordination evident on Twitter.

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It is possible that both the veritable lack of widespread interactivity and the variation in coordination represent HDD producers' intentional efforts to avoid detection and account suspension. For example, @FarsNewsInt, the only government-affiliated account that was active in the Telegram conversation, repeated Russian government officials' false equivalency claims without tagging any Russian accounts in its posts. This is not typical behavior of state-sponsored information operation campaigns, which generally attempt to amplify content broadly. In other cases, Telegram and VK accounts duplicated content previously published on each platform without attributing it to its original source. This may represent accounts' attempts to appear to operate independently to avoid detection from real or perceived content moderation practices that may be scanning for coordinated behavior.[6] Finally, the lack of coordination was especially robust on Twitter, where stated content moderation policies were the most restrictive of the platforms we examined (prior to Twitter's transfer to private ownership). Collectively, these patterns appear to have resulted in limited reach and engagement with HDD content.

The general absence of coordinated amplification of HDD content also extended to a limited use of common imagery; no examples of overt HDD imagery were shared by more than four accounts on any platform. However, the images that existed often had cross-platform similarities. On both Telegram and VK, images evocative of World War II were used to reframe the history of that era or to draw parallels to conflicts today. Images that were more frequently shared tended to pertain to other antisemitic tropes and conspiracy theories, such as Zionist Occupied Governments (ZOG), Nazis in Ukraine, and Żydokomuna (the belief that Jews collaborated to import Soviet communism to Poland and overthrow Polish sovereignty). One notable difference in shared imagery patterns across platforms was that many users on Telegram shared the same images, whereas multiple presentations of the same image on Twitter and VK tended to come from single accounts.

We also explored the possibility of content coordination across platforms. Although we identified no instances of shared imagery across the three platforms (save for a generic portrait of Hitler on Telegram and Twitter), there were three instances of similar or identical posting on Telegram and Twitter (in English). The examples occurred in January and February and contained links to a BitChute video series with the text "100 Proofs that Hitler was right…Cybergnostic" in one instance, "The former head of the ADL Abe Foxman tells Ukraine not to compare Holodomor, a real genocide by bolshevik Jews, to the Holohoax"[1] in the second instance, and "Who Murdered 66 Million Russians? Jewish Bolshevism" in the third.[7] In each case, many of the same Telegram accounts were involved (@dansknationalist, @endtimesnewz, @saveusfromnwo, and @sewinginc), but these did not match the Twitter usernames and the Twitter usernames never matched one another across the three examples.

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[1] *Please note that all quoted material is copied as originally posted.*
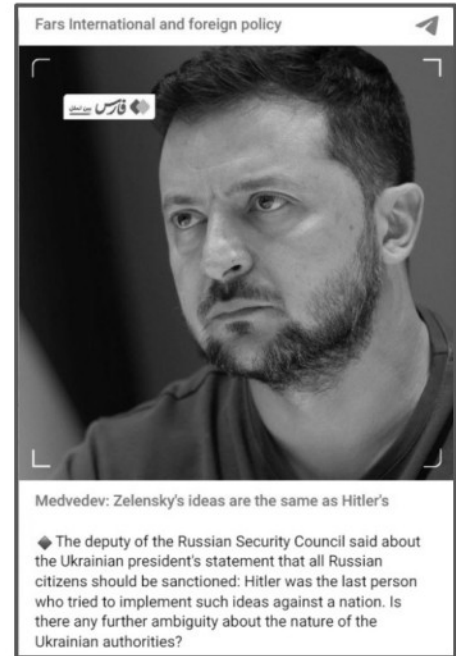
TELEGRAM

> *Despite publishing the most egregious HDD content, Telegram's HDD producers seldom mentioned each other in their posts or amplified one another's content. The network of activity was therefore highly fragmented and participation by state-sponsored accounts was almost non-existent.*

NETWORK ANALYSIS

Channels that propagated HDD content on Telegram often authored fringe content (i.e., extreme views that counter mainstream or widely accepted cultural or historical narratives), had few subscribers, and garnered little engagement. Perhaps as a consequence, they comprised only a loosely knit network; HDD-producing channels generally failed to engage with one another, particularly if they did not author content in the same language.[8] Given the preponderance of Persian-language HDD content, many of the most active authors in our dataset were Persian-language channels. However, all but one of these Persian-language channels are unlikely to be affiliated with the Iranian government or state-sponsored entities in Iran, and we found no evidence of official or state-sponsored channels from other countries.

As noted, GEC found extremely limited evidence of state-sponsored channels or their proxies producing or amplifying HDD content on Telegram. Among known Kremlin, Iran, and PRC-aligned accounts on Telegram, only @FarsNewsInt, an IRGC-affiliated news agency, posted content relevant to this conversation.[9] In six posts in 2022, @FarsNewsInt reported Russian government officials' public offline statements falsely equating Hitler's actions in World War II to current events in Europe (despite these offline statements, we did not find any Russian official account's Telegram posts containing HDD). In March, @FarsNewsInt repeated the Russian foreign minister's claim that the United States follows Hitler in its attempted subjugation of Europe, and in August, it reiterated another official's claim that Zelenskyy's stance toward Russian citizens mimics Hitler's "implementations."[10] Despite amplifying HDD content that originated elsewhere, @FarsNewsInt tagged only itself in posts and did not interact with any other channels in the network. This departs from behavior typically expected of state-sponsored entities attempting to amplify a narrative, and it suggests that such entities may be leery of the backlash that disseminating HDD content would likely provoke. Still, each piece of @FarsNewsInt's content was viewed by an average audience of 3,500.

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Medvedev: Zelensky's ideas are the same as Hitler's

◆ The deputy of the Russian Security Council said about the Ukrainian president's statement that all Russian citizens should be sanctioned: Hitler was the last person who tried to implement such ideas against a nation. Is there any further ambiguity about the nature of the Ukrainian authorities?

This 9 August post from @FarsNewsInt quotes Russian government official Dmitry Medvedev comparing the current Ukrainian President to Hitler, based on his intentions and actions.

卐✠LuftWaffe_Channel卐✠
@aya_midanid_00

624	1.33K	182	6	125
Subscribers	Photos	Videos	Files	Links

卐✠*LuftWaffe_Channel*✠卐
📖Specialized reference for history review
📚
The
🗡Description of different ideologies🗡
The
🏆Introducing decisive battles🏆
The
🎖Full explanation of weapon details🎖

⭕Under the supervision of Luftwaffe Scientific Research Association of Iran⭕

This channel's bio associates with a Nazi entity ("Luftwaffe," the German air force during World War II). It tagged explicitly pro-Nazi channels in its HDD posts.

Despite the conversation's overall fragmentation, interactivity among HDD-producing channels did, occasionally, occur. In such cases, one or both accounts in a dyad (i.e., a pair formed when one channel mentioned another) often had an explicitly pro-Nazi handle. For example, the most central actor in the network was @roozegaran0, a channel with only 346 subscribers that is devoted to "experiencing history differently." @roozegaran0 repeatedly tagged overtly pro-Nazi accounts like @WW_II_Nazi_Gif, @Waffen_SSA, and @WaffenSSgifs in posts that promised "historical facts about World War II" or "the facts of the Third Reich."[11] In another example, @aya_midanid_00, a channel that purports to be "under the supervision of the Iran Luftwaffe Scientific Research Association" (an apparent reference to an Iranian pro-Nazi organization) regularly tagged pro-Nazi channels like @NazisFacts in its HDD posts. @aya_midanid_00 appealed to users with such hooks as "Have you heard of the lies of the Holocaust and the persecution of its critics!" and "What do you know about the fictitious story of the Holocaust?"[12]

COORDINATED BEHAVIOR

Although channels producing HDD content seldom referenced other network channels in their posts, examples of channels "forwarding" another channel's content were rare. On even fewer occasions, identical or nearly identical non-forwarded content was produced by multiple channels without attribution to the original post. Together, this suggests that these Telegram channels maintained at least a cursory awareness of one another's posts, and that they occasionally coordinated the dissemination of messages. In rare cases, coordination among accounts appeared intentionally obfuscated.

The posts above present nearly identical content with only slight cosmetic variations. Because neither post used Telegram's "forward" feature, the posts are not automatically linked and appear to be designed to lead readers to believe that each represents original content.

For example, eight German-language posts from eight channels shared content that declared "A documented report by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who visited all German camps during WWII... reported these were labor camps only" and asserted "there was no reason to kill those Jews."[13] Each of these posts used Telegram's "forward" feature to duplicate a pre-existing post authored by another channel (that channel has since ceased to exist). In another example, seven English-language posts from seven channels in August claimed to "Debunk the Holocaust," providing links to a "10-hour deep dive of evidence against the alleged intentional extermination of J3w$."[14] The original post was authored by @ricebowlsociety, which appears to have a nexus to China (its bio claims it is "not Pro or Anti CCP. Just Pro-Chinese"). In a third example, 17 English-language posts from 14 channels linked to HDD videos first shared by @hiddentruthvideos, a channel that "houses a collection of censored videos."[15] These videos include titles like "Holocaust Testimonies You Didn't See" and "Six Million Jews."

Furthermore, some channels duplicated pre-existing content without using the "forward" feature in an apparent attempt to conceal their coordination. Specifically, most of the 15 Persian-language posts authored on 6 May by 15 channels declaring "there were not 6 million Jews in the world, let alone say that 6

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million Jews were massacred in a single holocaust" were produced as though each were original content.[16] Given the identical nature of these posts and their temporal proximity, it is implausible that they were produced independently. Yet the lack of "forward" designations indicates that one or more individuals attempted to conceal the cross-channel coordination by copying and pasting content, presenting each post as though it were original.

COMMON IMAGERY

While the most overt HDD content that we identified on Telegram never featured images that were replicated across more than two posts, some of the less explicit content—including posts that were openly pro-Hitler—did. These examples tended to contain depictions of historical documents or images from the World War II era. For example, 11 accounts shared the same image of a letter purportedly written by Hitler to the Shah of Iran with well wishes for the country.[17] Another seven accounts shared a photograph of Hitler with his dog, declaring "If any opinion is to be respected, Hitler ranks first."[18] Another three accounts posted an image that purportedly contained the recorded IQ scores of Nazi leaders to show how far above average they were.[19] Finally, three channels shared an image of Belgian King Leopold II beside a picture of Hitler. These posts attempted to minimize the impact of the Holocaust by comparing it to the atrocities carried out by Leopold II in Africa.[20] Importantly, examples of posts with repeated imagery typically also contained identical text, and they were often duplicated without "forwarding" or attributing content to any other author.

The images above were each posted three times by three different channels. The first was cited as evidence that Nazi leadership had above average intelligence, and the second was used to argue that the impact of the Holocaust was overstated while other atrocities have been overlooked.

These three posts each contain the same image of Hitler with his dog. They also have highly similar text that asserts Hitler's "respectability."

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TWITTER

> *HDD content on Twitter was rarely amplified; our analysis found no dissemination networks, state-sponsored accounts, or coordinated campaigns. Twitter's ability and inclination to maintain Terms of Service enforcement may have contributed to these outcomes.*

NETWORK AND COORDINATED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

In our previous analysis, we identified HDD content on Twitter published by fringe accounts with few followers and whose content garnered little engagement.[21] In this social network and coordinated behavior analysis, we found almost no interaction among accounts publishing overtly HDD content. This may reflect direct and indirect effects of Twitter's vigilant enforcement of its Terms of Service when we collected the data. Twitter actively monitored its platform to quickly remove HDD content during our data collection timeframe; accounts promoting HDD narratives may have been aware that amplification of their tweets could result in Twitter banning them, resulting in self-moderation. The lack of visible dissemination networks leads us to hypothesize that users tended to minimize their production and amplification of HDD content on Twitter, and they likely used other, less moderated platforms to promote these narratives more aggressively.

This hypothesis is reinforced by instances of tweets leveraging emojis or question marks to create plausible deniability, potentially in an effort to evade content moderation restrictions. The spectrum of these ambiguous tweets ranged from barely veiled HDD statements: "🙁 are you questioning the Holohoax? Super-Money 😂😂😂"; to dubiously mocking or supporting HDD speech: "I'm not saying Hitler was right, but Jews do be eating our kids and drinking their blood, so maybe he was onto something there" 😬😬"; to potentially innocuous questions: "What's the deal with #ZOG?"[22] This highly context-dependent language in shallow context tweets creates multiple interpretations with enough deniability to persist on Twitter.

Although we saw little explicit HDD content amplified through networks of Twitter accounts, we found several examples of HDD-adjacent content, often with terms like ZOG and Żydokomuna.

Instead of overtly HDD content, social network and coordinated behavior analyses revealed transmission of more generic, HDD-adjacent conspiracy theories or tweets highlighting Poland's plight during and after World War II. Conspiracy theories about Żydokomuna, ZOG, Jewish control over world events, and Zionism featured heavily among networks of accounts that interacted at least eight times.[23]

When only two accounts interacted with each other, they often focused on Zionism (alternatively referenced as "ZioNazism") and Jewish influence in the Russia-Ukraine war, topics that generated little widespread engagement.[24] Tweets often alleged Jewish influence had infiltrated both governments. For example, one tweet stated, "the question of the Russo-Ukrainian War shows us that not only the Western ZOGs, but also the Russian ZOG in the Kremlin is interested in controlling and directing this."[25]

When more than two accounts comprised a network, discussions often focused on more nebulous topics like the Żydokomuna conspiracy—weaving in current political events or highlighting historical biographies of activists and politicians—and Polish grievances throughout the 20th century.[26] User sentiment that "Zydokomuna controls the Polish judiciary! They will not allow themselves to be accounted for and judged for the crimes against Poles!" reflected the often-interconnected nature of Jewish control and Polish victimization themes.[27]

In a reflection of mainstream views, the largest cluster of account interactivity was comprised of nine accounts that opposed antisemitism, racism, and Holocaust denialism.[28] These accounts often quoted authors, politicians, or other persons spreading HDD content, and then rebutted their claims as factually incorrect or greatly exaggerated. Despite the size of this cluster, its content generated limited engagement, as no account garnered more than 12 retweets.

We also sought the presence of official or state-sponsored accounts from Iran, the PRC, and Russia in our network and found zero instances of their activity. Further, to gauge the mainstream reach of HDD content on Twitter, we examined 1,970 tweets potentially containing HDD content that were published by accounts with more than 10,000 followers. We identified 210 instances of HDD or HDD-adjacent content within that subset, while the remaining 90% of tweets either refuted HDD content or reported on news events containing HDD keywords.[29] Although the most frequent themes among these tweets were those discussed above, "Holocaust Industry" was mentioned in 20 tweets and portrayed as a means to profit or silence criticism. For example, an English-language tweet decried "the 2 year Holocaust which you all have turned into the holocaust industry to exploit people, places, and politics for your riches for the last 74 years," and a Turkish author exclaimed,

Above are examples of HDD-related images that were published multiple times on Twitter. The tweets showing concentration camp imagery were published by the same account. The 20th Century Hoax image appeared in two tweets, while the image of the Soldier appeared in three. All these tweets received minimal amplification and engagement.

"They have created an Islamophobia industry... just as Israel created a Holocaust industry to cover up its persecution."[30] The general paucity of HDD content from official or state-sponsored accounts and accounts with the largest followings is consistent with our findings on Telegram and VK.

Finally, despite fragments of interactivity among accounts, we did not find any instances of coordinated posting of identical or nearly identical HDD content on Twitter. Although it is possible that some accounts may have attempted or were briefly engaged in such behavior, there was no visibly available evidence. If

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there was any coordinated activity amplifying HDD content on Twitter, it likely gained the attention of the platform and was removed, nullifying any evidence of enduring amplification.

COMMON IMAGERY

Our analysis of approximately 7,400 images published on Twitter revealed that a majority of those were antisemitic and mostly published by a handful of accounts. For example, user @akuzator, which regularly posted antisemitic, anti-EU, and anti-Russia content, published hundreds of tweets containing the same image, a Star of David symbol with a rainbow background behind it, with "ŻYDOKOMUNA" written diagonally across the star.[31]

Among images connected directly to the Holocaust and promoting HDD content, all were published four or fewer times. One image that was published by three different accounts features a cartoon depiction of a soldier with a Star of David on his rifle, standing over crying children. The soldier is pointing a rifle at them as they read a book called "Holocaust History" with a swastika on the cover. Another image, published twice on Twitter, shows the 20th Century Fox logo altered to display "20th Century Hoax." One account, @TerroristTechno, which regularly publishes conspiratorial content related to a wide range of topics, published several tweets containing an image of the Auschwitz concentration camp with the captain "Holocaust Deprogramming Course."[32]

VK

> VK users publishing HDD content seldom mentioned each other in their posts. Activity on the platform was defined by inorganic amplification of posts through shares by groups of accounts and, to a lesser extent, co-posting. Participation by state-sponsored accounts was non-existent.

### NETWORK AND COORDINATED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

Individual accounts and groups that shared HDD content on VK were often unconnected and had limited followership and engagement—although several groups had far more of both. There was no evidence of any official or state-sponsored accounts or proxies leading or participating in this conversation.

Despite the limited evidence of a network propagating HDD content, much of the content containing HDD keywords appears inorganic due to a high volume of shares and co-posting by likely inauthentic accounts.[33] For example, posts claiming that the presence of gas chambers at concentration camps is a "myth" were shared 45 times by 31 unique users;[34] many contain a video of Robert Faurisson, a well-known French Holocaust denier, titled, "The Problem of the Gas Chambers."[35] A few users shared the same original post multiple times—sometimes on the same day, and also days apart, indicative of inorganic amplification.[36] The original posts were also shared up to 59 days after creation (and 19 days after, on average), an unusually long time after original publication.

Among accounts that shared the "gas chambers" post, nine also shared a post from Glory to the Russians (@slavarusam) that claimed the history of the Holocaust has been distorted to fuel Putin's "propaganda engine."[37] Like the previous post, this post suggested that "propaganda" about the Holocaust fuels patriotism and fear in support of the fight against fascism. The overlap in users sharing these two posts also supports coordinated inorganic amplification.
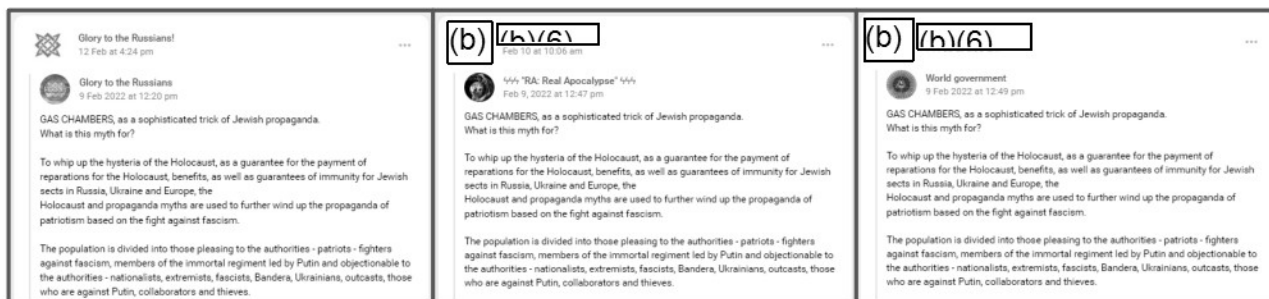
The above screenshots show the time and date of publication for three of the four original posts denying the existence of gas chambers at concentration camps. The fourth post has since been deleted. At times, users reshared more than one of the original posts or shared the same original post multiple times. Glory to the Russians, RA: Real Apocalypse, and World Government all have an audience of at least 9,000 followers or group members.
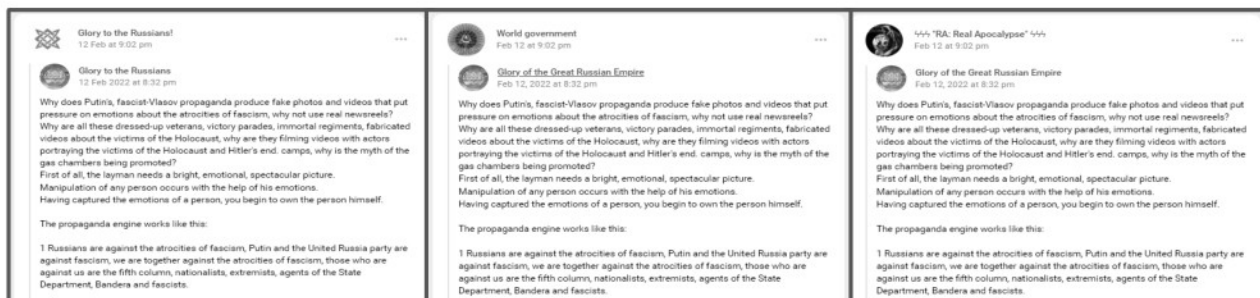
The three accounts that originally published the "gas chambers" post (Glory to the Russians [the author of the post shown above], World Government, and RA: Real Apocalypse) were among the 15 total accounts that shared the post shown above.

Larger clusters of coordinated activity were evident on VK. However, these clusters pushed more generally antisemitic or conspiratorial narratives rather than overtly denying or distorting the Holocaust. For example, 19% of the posts in our dataset were shares or copies of posts from individual user (b)(6) (@samcolt1911). All this account's posts were published in Russian and began with the same phrases: "sinister Zionism" and "Zionist occupied government."[38] Approximately 170 accounts shared or co-posted content from (b)(6) much of this behavior appears coordinated due to its high share volume from likely inauthentic accounts. For example, two of the accounts that reshared (b)(6) posts most often did so within a minute of one another. These two accounts also primarily shared content from other users instead of posting original content, and one of these accounts was listed as a contact on the other's profile.

Similarly, another cluster of likely inauthentic users shared or co-posted content saying that Russia is ruled by Israel and Ukraine is a "Zionist colony,"quoting Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the late Russian politician and Putin ally known for his strong ethnonationalist views.[39, 40] This content first appeared days after Zhirinovsky's death on 6 April. Some users shared the same post about Zhirinovsky twice in one day, and shares by three or more unique users were often published within seconds of each other, indicative of coordinated amplification. Moreover, this content was repeated in over 150 comments on posts in community pages, continuing its amplification for an unusually long period of over five months.

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COMMON IMAGERY

GEC analyzed 1,844 images embedded in VK posts and comments that contained HDD-related keywords. There were many examples of repeated images, and they tended to convey one of two narratives. The first alleged that Ukrainians are Nazis, and the second used World War II photos to promote alternative histories of both the war and the Holocaust.

More than 100 images suggested a connnection between Ukraine, Nazis, and the Azov Batalion, which reflects a common narrative promoted by the Kremlin regarding its current war in Ukraine.[41] The images regularly juxtaposed images of Ukrainians or Ukrainian forces with images of Ukrainians displaying both the Star of David and the swastika, suggesting there is compatability between Jews and Nazism.[42]

The screenshots above show co-posts about Vladimir Zhirinovsky from individual users and group pages. Their text is identical, but the video file names are unique. This combination of text and video appeared in various comments on generally antisemitic or conspiratorial posts.
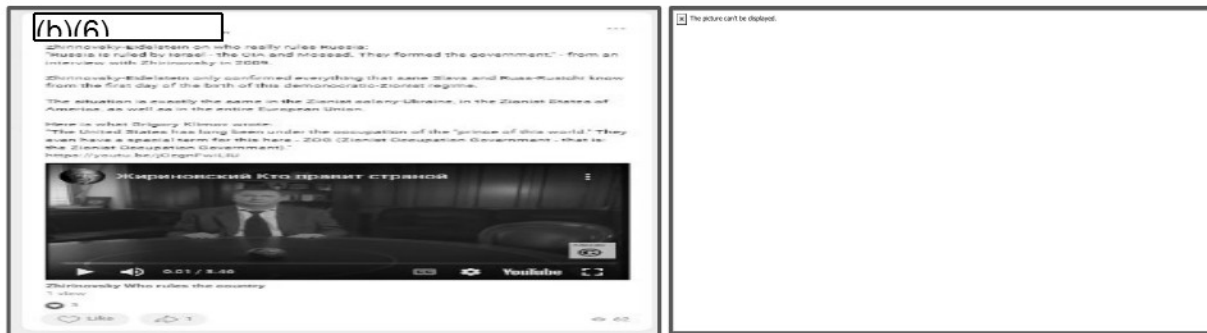
Above, the five images displayed were often combined in various configurations in comments by a user with the screen name (b)(6) The juxtaposition of Nazi, Jewish, and Ukrainian symbolism is meant to suggest a connection among the identities. The screenshots shown at bottom left and right are examples of configurations of some of the images as they appeared in VK comments. (b)(6) has been suspended by VK due to "suspicious activity."

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Similar to content on Telegram, various posts contained World War II-era photos, suggesting that governments altered the history of the war and the Holocaust for political gain. Various pairs of side-by-side images were used to suggest that the Russian and German governments doctored World War II images to make Nazi
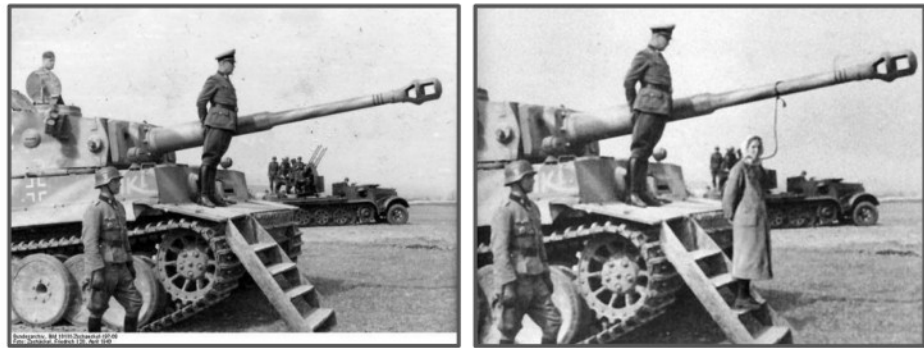
An example of a pair of World War II photos alleging that the Kremlin modifies images to make the Nazis appear especially brutal. In this case, the post suggested a woman was edited into the photo to look like she was being hanged from a tank.

forces appear more brutal than they really were and distract the population from "real fascism, namely, the actions of Jews… [and] the Jewish transnational banking mafia, which created… Hitlerite fascism and… propaganda."[43] Other images from the era were used alongside suggestions that the notion of Europe's postwar "denazification" was a myth fabricated by European governments, and that Nazis have since made their way to other places, such as Ukraine.[44] A third group of images showed scenes of the war along with the suggestion that Finland has been conspiring against Russia since the early 1900s and continues its Russophobic behavior without reprimand from Europe.[45] This content also claimed that Finland committed a "Russian Holocaust" in the 1918 Russo-Finnish War, which inspired Nazi actions during World War II.

DISCUSSION

[Conclusion and "so, what?"]

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We would appreciate your feedback by completing a short survey here.

REFERENCES

[1] For our initial analysis, please see "Content Denying or Distorting Holocaust History Connects Revisionist Community on VK, Telegram, Twitter, TikTok, Blogs, and Alternative Websites," GEC2022-GBL-838, 8 September 2022.

[2] As detailed in the earlier report, Telegram and VK presented the most permissive policies among platforms analyzed, and overt HDD was often found on both sites. Twitter has more restrictive policies than Telegram and VK – it explicitly forbids the distribution of symbols like the Swastika – but it stops short of banning generalized Holocaust denialism or distortion in full.

[3] We define HDD-adjacent content as antisemitic content that appears to accept premises of HDD without explicitly referencing the Holocaust. For example, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) defines Jewish opportunism as "claims that the Jewish people 'use' the Holocaust for the purposes of financial gain." HDD-adjacent content may imply that the Jewish people have exploited the Holocaust for financial gain without mentioning it explicitly. HDD-adjacent content has been observed to accompany HDD content in some cases but appears in its absence in others. The keyword "Zionist Occupied Government" was often found in HDD-adjacent content.

[4] The number of tweets is lower than it was in the previous report due to a previously unidentified mistranslation of the Arabic words for "Zion Fascism" in the query used to collect Twitter data. This resulted in a removal of 36,000 tweets from our data set.

[5] The Boolean statement is crafted to maximize the number of HDD results while minimizing extraneous, tangential, or irrelevant content. The number of results for a given platform should therefore be interpreted as the number of posts that match HDD-related keywords, rather than the number of posts containing HDD.

[6] Why more content was artificially amplified on VK than Telegram is an open question. One possibility is that Telegram channels are inherently less oriented around and encouraging of account interactivity than individual or group accounts on VK.

[7] See "Content Denying or Distorting Holocaust History Connects Revisionist Community on VK, Telegram, Twitter, TikTok, Blogs, and Alternative Websites," GEC2022-GBL-838, 8 September 2022 for more information on GEC's analysis of BitChute as an alternative video hosting platform.

[8] This presents a contrast to a finding in Report 1, where GEC observed interactivity among HDD-video hosting sites consumed by audiences in different countries with different native languages.

[9] GEC regional analysts curate lists of official government, state-sponsored, and government-aligned accounts on Twitter, VK, and Telegram. Lists are continually maintained and were up to date as of October 2022.

[10] https://telegram.me/s/farsnewsint/134888, https://telegram.me/s/farsnewsint/145807

[11] https://telegram.me/s/roozegaran0/712, https://telegram.me/s/roozegaran0/729

[12] https://telegram.me/s/aya_midanid_00/2982, https://telegram.me/s/aya_midanid_00/3029

[13] https://telegram.me/s/wahreoffenbarung/49310

[14] https://t.me/RiceBowlSociety/2771

[15] telegram.me/s/canadiancuriosities/3062

[16] https://telegram.me/s/mojahedin_iran/5474, https://telegram.me/s/charik_media/33952, https://telegram.me/s/sepah_cyberi_iran/51479

[17] https://telegram.me/s/meme_hube/1147

[18] https://telegram.me/s/bohlolol/74561

[19] https://telegram.me/s/hot_news/345868

[20] https://telegram.me/s/pn_kfp/34894

[21] Please see, "Content Denying or Distorting Holocaust History Connects Revisionist Community on VK, Telegram, Twitter, TikTok, Blogs, and Alternative Websites," GEC2022-GB-838, 8 September 2022.

[22] https://twitter.com/LosDeicias1972/status/1508062496946597895, https://twitter.com/IAmMcFearless/status/1491851041607983104, https://twitter.com/K_M_Kapa_/status/1478025064872349698

[23] https://twitter.com/tadeusz38725389/status/1477509818936090624, https://twitter.com/AMRANIXXI/status/1508240509860524038, https://twitter.com/Wojciec38893024/status/1490640957506834433, https://twitter.com/KurtTurk61TrTs/status/1538874844816752643

[24] https://twitter.com/Freedom33453/status/1559698668260691968, https://twitter.com/AMRANIXXI/status/1508234219373441029

[25] https://twitter.com/DanJ30617869/status/1504043658395348999

[26] https://twitter.com/Wojciec38893024/status/1505094344910454786, https://twitter.com/Bagatelka1/status/1551145793020727299, https://twitter.com/zelsta5312/status/1491877429312380929

[27] https://twitter.com/Jarema2021PLv2/status/1487781540394323976

[28] https://twitter.com/andreas_spr/status/1477747124943130630, https://twitter.com/JoJostsee/status/1477189213829451777, https://twitter.com/RandyDog616/status/1486814339684347915

[29] https://twitter.com/AquAhora1/status/1518993050726506497, https://twitter.com/doubleDutchquak/status/1542977951205048320, https://twitter.com/piotruchg/status/1536576808178618368, https://twitter.com/raykwong/status/1513520257322782721, https://twitter.com/schwurbelwatch/status/1548699044796502018, https://twitter.com/pistach01/status/1477850030996221957, https://twitter.com/jobahout/status/1479561829676371970, https://twitter.com/IsraelinGermany/status/1484104414168240128

[30] https://twitter.com/cool_grandad/status/1551287071913934854, https://twitter.com/metinsolmaz/status/1563462508345978880

[31] https://twitter.com/akuzator

[32] https://twitter.com/TerroristTechno, https://twitter.com/TerroristTechno/status/1560408226306334721

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Democratic Backsliding – Holocaust Denial and Distortion

[33] We assess that the accounts amplifying the posts described in this section are likely inauthentic because they displayed some combination of the following behaviors and characteristics: high post volume compared to low follower or group member counts, feeds primarily filled with shares of content from other profiles instead of original content, shares of widely disparate content (e.g., highly political or conspiratorial content beside light-hearted animal images), and recurrent post sharing in coordination with other users.

[34] https://vk.com/wall335203613_8241

[35] https://vk.com/wall-180259591_6975

[36] https://vk.com/wall525934484_32626

[37] https://vk.com/wall-38249169_18906

[38] https://vk.com/wall86361627_4991, https://vk.com/wall79283102_3553

[39] https://vk.com/wall44772053_102121

[40] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/06/vladimir-zhirinovsky-obituary

[41] https://euvsdisinfo.eu/key-narratives-in-pro-kremlin-disinformation-nazis/

[42] https://vk.com/wall-10863607_229455

[43] https://vk.com/wall525934484_31032

[44] https://vk.com/wall14102246_2756

[45] https://vk.com/wall314169049_5828