

Briefing to California Senate Judiciary Committee
Informational Hearing on State of Social Media Regulation

Sophie Zhang

Facebook whistleblower

Inauthentic activity is not misinformation

- Inauthentic activity is unrelated to misinformation
- Misinformation is content-based.
 - “*Cats and dogs are the same species*” is misinformation.
The identity of the speaker does not matter
- Inauthenticity is user-based.
 - 10,000 fake accounts saying “*cats are adorable*” is inauthentic.
The content of the message does not matter.
- People have a right to freedom of speech. Accounts do not.

FB is used by dictators as a tool for repression

Azerbaijan releases election results... before the polls even open

Electoral commission accidentally publish results showing a victory for Ilham Aliyev, the country's long-standing President, a day before voting

Alec Luhn | Wednesday 09 October 2013 19:04 | comments

AZERBAIJAN

Prominent Azerbaijani Rights Activist In Coma After 'Traffic Accident'

November 04, 2019 10:44 GMT

By RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service

'Facebook isn't interested in countries like ours': Azerbaijan troll network returns months after ban

State-backed harassment campaign targets journalists and dissidents in authoritarian country

Julia Carrie Wong in San Francisco and **Luke Harding** in London

Tue 13 Apr 2021 04:00 EDT

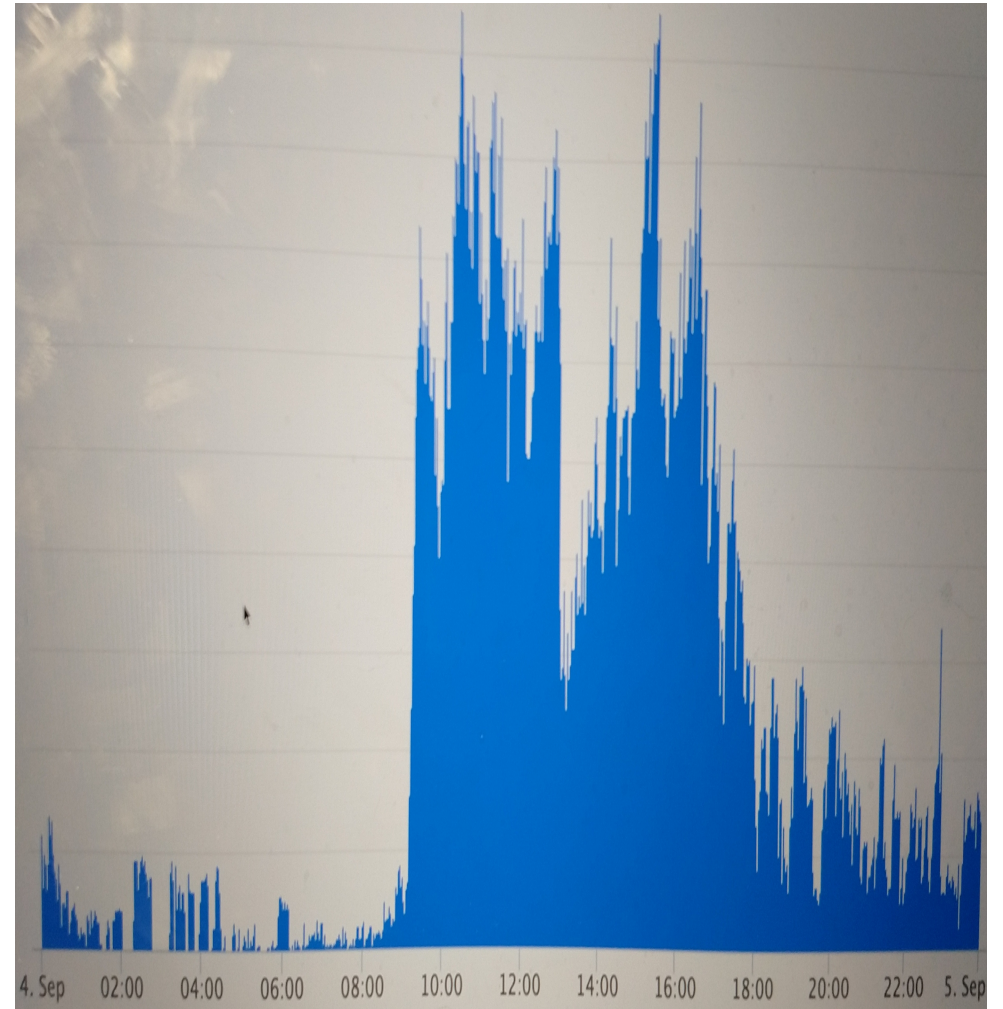
One year after the Karabakh war, politics in Azerbaijan has come to an end

With the Aliyev regime still triumphant one year on from its military takeover in Nagorno-Karabakh, chances for dialogue - whether over Karabakh or inside Azerbaijan - are non-existent

27 September 2021, 11.59am

Anatomy of a troll farm: Azerbaijan

- Started daily at 9AM Baku; stopped for 1PM lunch break.
- Did not work evenings, weekends, or national holidays (e.g. Novruz)
- Coordinated activity in FB messaging groups e.g. “1st day shift”, “3rd day duty group”, etc.
- Harassed domestic opposition w/ ~1 million comments per month
- Still active today



Anatomy of a Facebook takedown: Azerbaijan

- August 2019: Azeri government troll farm discovered and raised. Eastern Europe and Middle East teams both disclaim ownership.
- November 2019: Azeri protesters arrested. I raise the troll farm again.
- February 2020: Investigator confirms findings and involvement of ruling YAP party
- April 2020: Non-essential Azeri employees temporarily furloughed due to COVID. “Coincidentally”, the troll farm temporarily stops, which I raise as evidence.
- August 2020: Mass arrests of Azeri opposition leaders. I raise the troll farm again, which convinces FB to begin an official investigation
- September 4, 2020: I am officially fired by Facebook for poor performance
- September 27, 2020: Start of Nagorno-Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia
- October 8, 2020: Facebook officially takes down the Azeri governmental troll farm. Facebook fails to prevent them from returning afterwards

YAP harassment still ongoing today Even BBC/RFE/VOA fall victim



AzadliqRadiosu was live.

3d · 🌐

November 5, 2021 at 9:59 AM

- The Parliament adopted the Amnesty Act
- Eldar Hasanov's situation worsen again
- The number of immigrants to Russia after the war in Armenia increases
- Armenian language course was opened in Baku

November 5, 2021

⚙️ · [See original](#) · [Rate this translation](#)



👍 35

510 Comments 3 Shares



Medine Gulerli

Armenia has never stopped hatred against Azerbaijan and therefore it is still unrecognizable

Like · Reply · [See Original \(Azerbaijani\)](#) · 2d



Sevil Salyayeva

November 8 is Zefer day. Announcing an amnesty act in every day is a great importance. This special meaning gives information that there will be double holiday.

Like · Reply · [See Original \(Azerbaijani\)](#) · 2d



Vaqif

The year anniversary of our Zefer history will fall twice as a holiday in history. And having such an amnesty in this history shows the value given to the people

Like · Reply · [See Original \(Azerbaijani\)](#) · 2d



LəməN Qaciyeva

It is a very happy situation for the Azerbaijani people to announce the amnesty on November 8, Zafer Day and immediately on the day. This is one of the most important days in Azerbaijan.

Like · Reply · [See Original \(Azerbaijani\)](#) · 2d



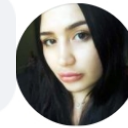
Terane Meherremli

Azerbaijan's brutal movie wrote history and therefore it won't be a little so that Armenia can return. That's why he should reconcile with the truth

Like · Reply · [See Original \(Azerbaijani\)](#) · 2d



Ellada Babayeva



Medine Gulerli

Personal Coach

👍 Like



Sevil Salyay

Kitchen/Cooking

👍 1 person

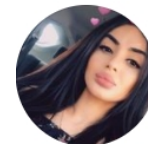
👍 Like



Vaqif

Water Park

👍 Like



LəməN Qaci

Consulting Ager

👍 1 person

👍 Like



Terane Meh

Personal Coach

👍 2 people

👍 Like

Americans distrust FB's ability to stop interference

North Carolina Facebook page labelled fake news

By Jane Wakefield
Technology reporter

🕒 18 February 2020

Multiple agencies have confirmed they believe the site is run by bots in a foreign country, and many posts are translated from Russian, but it's unclear who's on the other side of the keyboard.

- In February 2020, multiple news agencies reported on a FB page widely speculated to be Russian interference, causing an urgent FB investigation
- Although FB took the page down, it was made by a real North Carolinian pretending to be badly disguised Russian interference
- In contrast, FB was slower to act on a simultaneous case of literal Russian bots acting in U.S. politics.
(Caveats: Unrelated to Russian government, no significant impact.)

Why doesn't FB fix the problem?

- **Economics answer: information asymmetry and market externality**
 - Damage from inauthenticity is not incurred by social media company, besides PR damage
 - We do not expect Philip Morris to solve tobacco addiction
 - Company focus is on reducing PR harm. But the point of inauthenticity is to not be seen. Fake accounts are most effective when least visible
 - Market failure occurs because the only entity that understands the problem is FB – which has no incentive to fix it.
 - Consumers, workers, and governments lack the information to make informed decisions about social media.