

# Trends in Online Foreign Influence Efforts | Empirical Studies of Conflict

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Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) create novel opportunities for a wide range of political actors. Foreign governments have used social media to influence politics in a range of countries by promoting propaganda, advocating controversial viewpoints, and spreading disinformation. This report updates previous work with data on 76 such foreign influence efforts (FIE) targeting 30 different countries from 2013 through 2019, as well as 20 domestic influence efforts (DIE) in which governments targeted their own citizens. Influence efforts (IEs) are defined as: (i) coordinated campaigns by a state or the ruling party in an autocracy to impact one or more specific aspects of politics at home or in another state, (ii) through media channels, including social media, by (iii) producing content designed to appear indigenous to the target state. The objective of such campaigns can be quite broad and to date have included shaping election outcomes at various levels, shifting the political agenda on topics ranging from health to security, and encouraging political polarization. Our data draw on more than 920 media reports and 380 research articles/reports to identify IEs, track their progress, and classify their features.

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