Graphika

Step into My Parler

Suspected Russian Operation Targeted Far-Right American Users on Platforms Including Gab and Parler, Resembled Recent IRA-Linked Operation that Targeted Progressives

Graphika Team

10.2020

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Russian operators ran a far-right website and social media accounts that targeted American users with pro-Trump and anti-Biden messaging, according to information from Reuters and Graphika's investigation. This included the first known Russian activity on the platforms Gab and Parler. The operation appeared connected to a recent Russian website that targeted progressives in America with anti-Biden messaging.

The far-right "Newsroom for American and European Based Citizens," naebc[.]com, pushed the opposite end of the political spectrum from the ostensibly progressive PeaceData site, but the two assets showed such a strong family resemblance that they appear to be two halves of the same operation. Both ran fake editorial personas whose profile pictures were generated by artificial intelligence; both claimed to be young news outlets based in Europe; both made language errors consistent with Russian speakers; both tried to hire freelance writers to provide their content; and, oddly enough, both had names that translate to obscenities in Russian.[1]

Reuters first tipped Graphika off to the existence of the NAEBC website and its likely relationship to PeaceData. U.S. law enforcement originally alerted the social media platforms to the existence of PeaceData. On September 1, Facebook attributed PeaceData to "individuals associated with past activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA)." Twitter attributed it to Russian state actors. Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) have taken similar action to stop activity related to NAEBC on their platforms. To date, Parler and Gab have not taken action on their platforms.

The NAEBC half of the operation was only created in June, and its most recent social media account was just 11 days old at the time it was exposed. The website focused on race issues, especially in the United States: despite claiming to be based in Europe, it posted five times more stories about the U.S. than about all European countries combined. On Gab and Parler - which

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[1] "PeaceData" sounds like the Russian word "пиздато," which means "f*cking awesome." The acronym NAEBC resembles the Russian "наёбка," which means "a f*cking scam." An IRA-linked operation that was exposed in March this year, EBLA, matched the Russian word "Ебля," or "f*cking."

were the main focus of its social media efforts - it posted strongly pro-Trump and anti-Biden messaging and engaged with content from leading voices on the American far right.

Taken together, NAEBC and PeaceData echoed the IRA's approach to targeting U.S. audiences in 2016-2017: they pushed users toward both ends of the political spectrum with divisive and hyper-partisan content. Both only posted a very small volume of content that directly referenced the U.S. presidential election, but to the extent that they did so, the content also echoed the IRA's earlier efforts. PeaceData targeted progressive users with anti-Biden messaging; NAEBC targeted users on the right with pro-Trump messaging. This echoes the U.S. Department of Justice's assessment of the 2016 IRA operation: "by early to mid-2016, Defendants' operations included supporting the presidential campaign of then-candidate Donald J. Trump ('Trump Campaign') and disparaging Hillary Clinton."

Unlike in 2016, however, neither effort built up a substantial audience. NAEBC's various assets attracted around 3,000 followers on Gab and 14,000 on Parler, but in each case they were following substantially more accounts than followed them in return: 11,000 on Gab, 22,000 on Parler.[2]

For comparison, PeaceData's main English-language Facebook page only had some 200 followers, and its Twitter account had around 3,000 followers. The PeaceData team shut down their site after it was exposed on September 1, leaving a final sign-off headlined, "Fucking awesome," in apparent confirmation of the Russian-language pun.
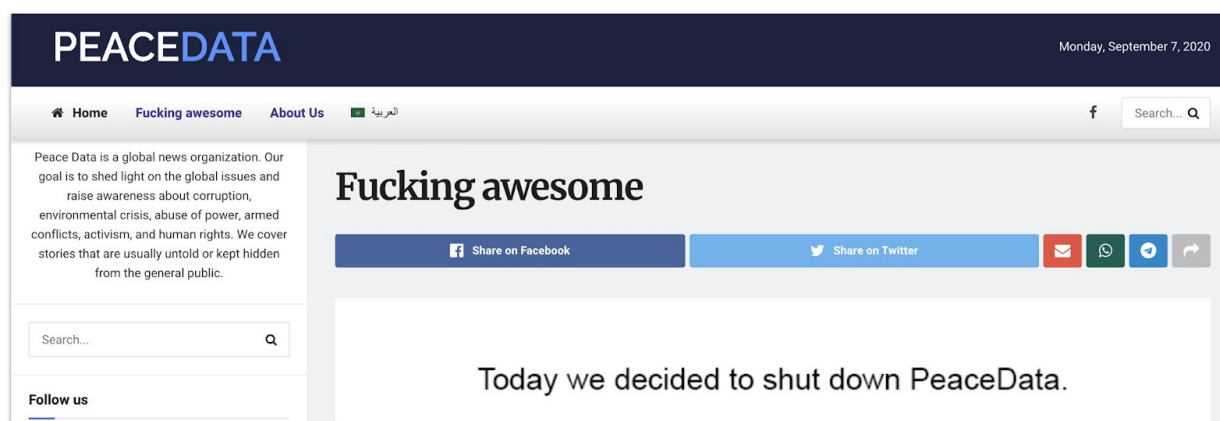

Sign-off article by PeaceData, September 7, 2020. (The operators soon changed the headline to "Peacedata," but not before Graphika archived it.)

These two websites and the associated social media accounts continued Russian efforts to target American audiences with divisive content. They also suggest a desire to "primarily denigrate Vice President Biden," echoing a recent U.S. intelligence assessment.

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[2] Figures last updated September 30 at 17:00 ET.

Operationally, the greatest novelty of this "NAEBC" operation was the use of Gab and Parler, the first time Russian operators are known to have worked on these platforms. Both platforms are popular among right-wing users: NAEBC's decision to operate there suggests a desire to target a specific audience. It may also indicate a more welcoming environment than the mainstream platforms: NAEBC maintained an account on Twitter (already suspended), but as of August 26, 2020, it only had 191 followers. Reuters said that Facebook had blocked an attempt to create one NAEBC account. As of September 28, the NAEBC domain had been blocked on Facebook and Twitter; the latter labeled it as "potentially harmful." As of October 1, NAEBC was still posting on both Gab and Parler; the operation's false personas had removed references to NAEBC from their biographies. Graphika will update this report if their situation changes.
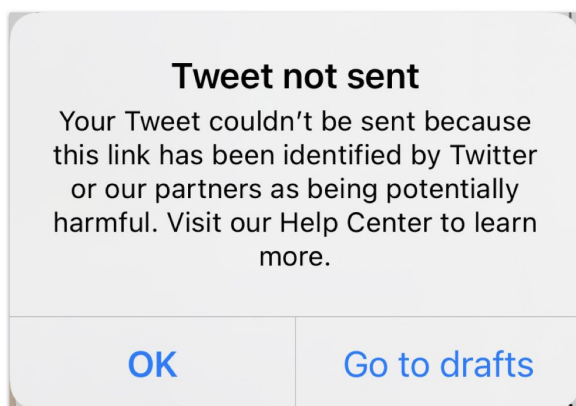
Result of trying to post an NAEBC article on Twitter, September 28.
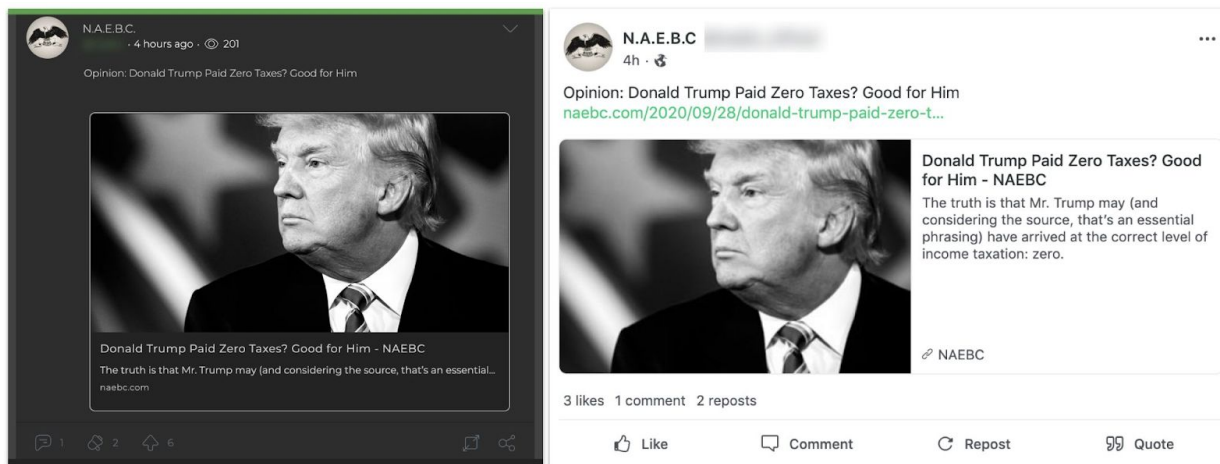
NAEBC posting on Parler (left) and Gab, September 28, 2020. The article on the NAEBC website was copied, with attribution, from Issues & Insights. We have obscured the handles of the assets to avoid giving them undue prominence.

Newsroom for American and European Based Citizens

Futhark You

The NAEBC website was registered on June 23, 2020, and posted its first articles on July 2. It billed itself as "a news organization and a news aggregator site dedicated to bringing you uncensored news and discussion on immigration, failures of modern liberalism, right-wing politics, globalism and restrictions on freedom in America and Europe."


Banner and dropdown menu options from the NAEBC website.

The operation employed symbolism that recalled national socialist (Nazi) and ultranationalist themes. Its website was headed in heavy Gothic type similar to Fraktur; its accounts on Gab and Parler featured an eagle carrying a banner with the NAEBC logo and a collection of national flags, with the U.S. and U.K. flags featured most prominently.

*NAEBC's profile on Gab; on the right, detail of the eagle.*

One of its personas, called Leopold or Leo, used pagan symbolism in his profile pictures on Gab and Parler, including the hammer of Thor and the ancient Germanic runic alphabet known as the Elder Futhark - both of which receive heavy use from far-right extremists. On Twitter, he used a symbol that is variously interpreted online as the Gates of Hell, the symbol of a human praying, and a Viking triskelion.
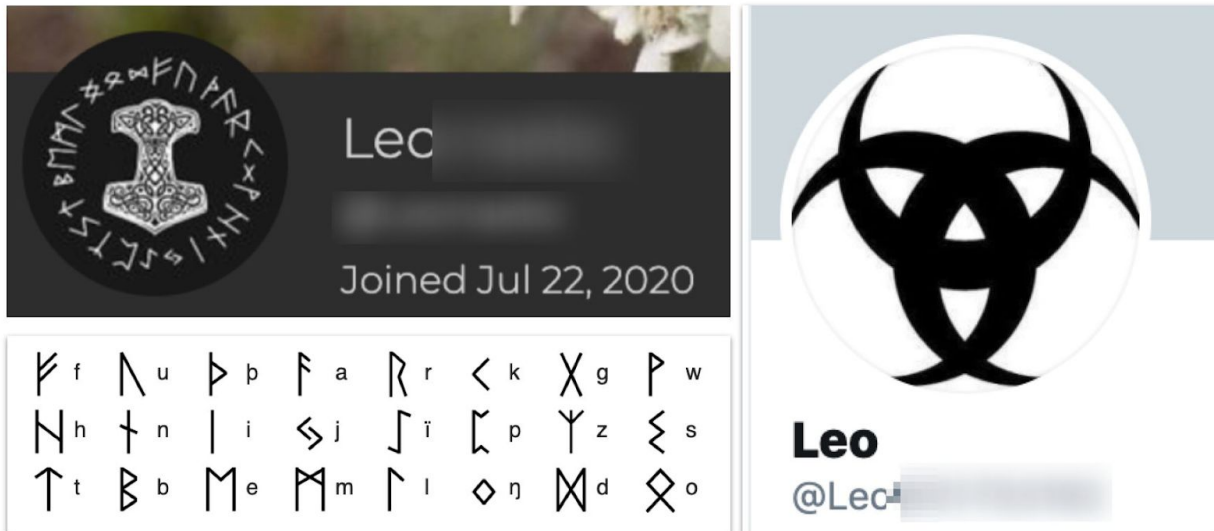
Profile pictures for the persona Leo on Parler (left) and Twitter (right). The left-hand image is the Hammer of Thor surrounded by the letters of the Elder Futhark; below, the same alphabet per [Wikipedia](#). The right-hand image has been variously interpreted, including as a [Viking symbol](#).

Location, Location, Mislocation

According to an American who wrote for the website, apparently without knowing it was an influence operation, it was based in Hungary. Another individual who wrote for it, also apparently unwittingly, said that it was based in Europe.
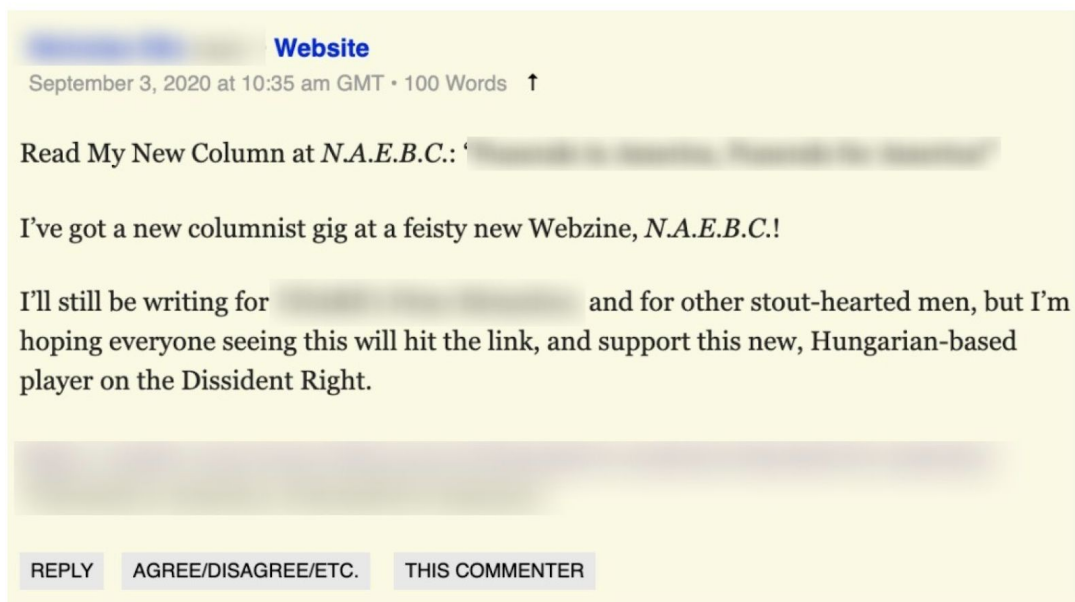

Post by an American who wrote for the website, giving its Hungarian location. Throughout this report, Graphika has obscured details that could be used to identify the individuals who appear to have written for the operation unwittingly.

One of the personas claimed coyly that they were a "group of friends from certain [*sic*] European country," which may well have been literally true, assuming that the Russian troll team were friends. It also claimed that they "prefer to keep anonymous because of the EU laws."
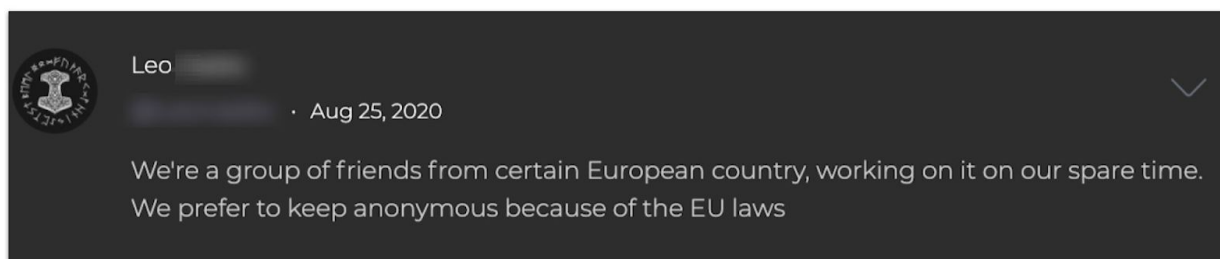
Post on Parler by Leo, describing his "group of friends from certain European country."

Alongside the website, the operation maintained five personas that claimed to be its editors and administrative staff. At least three of them had accounts on LinkedIn that were taken down some time before the end of September 2020, but enough traces remained in Google's cache to confirm that one of these, too, claimed a Hungarian location, and two more were ostensibly based in Amsterdam.
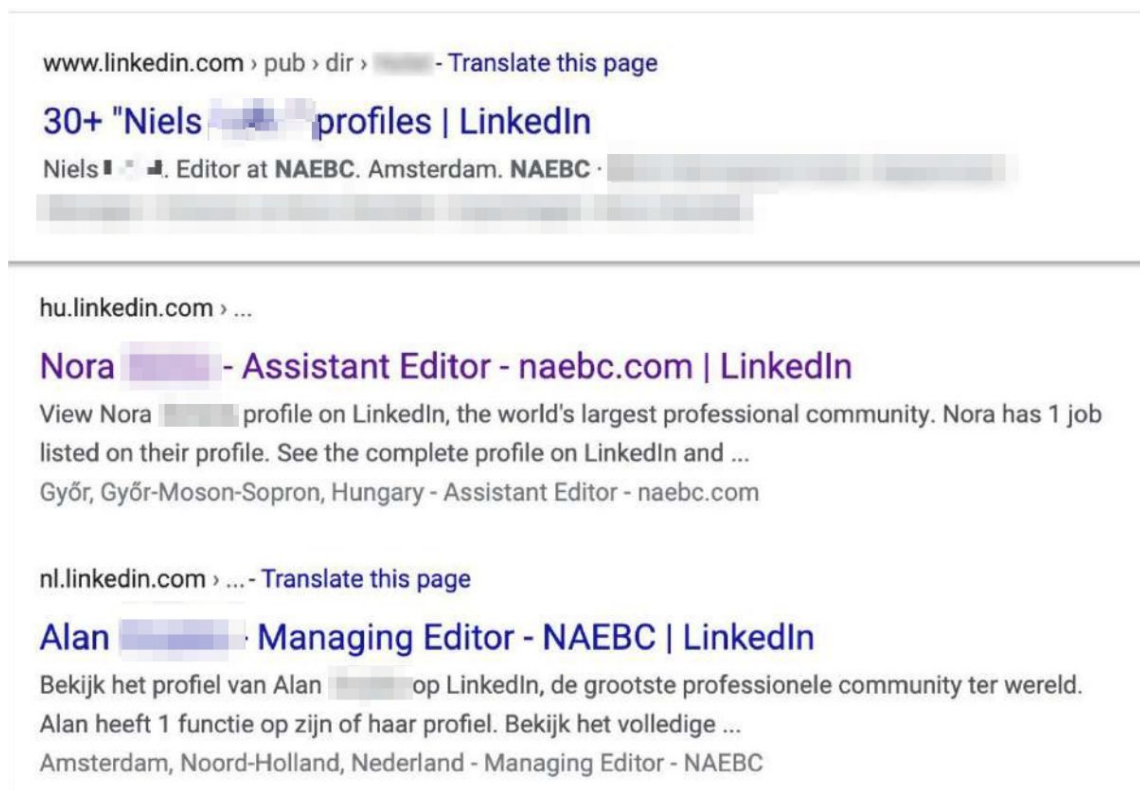

Traces of the LinkedIn profiles for Nora (Hungary) and Alan and Niels (both Netherlands), from Google Search.

Despite this claim of European origins, the vast majority of the articles that NAEBC published on its website between July 2 and September 25 focused on race and politics in the United States.

One article each dealt with events in Canada (beheadings of Christian statues), Switzerland (Muslim radicalization), France (harassment by Muslims), and Turkey (bombing Christan villages). Two articles each covered Germany (pedophilia; government support for Antifa) and Italy (violence by refugees). Three articles dealt with the UK (two cases of Muslim migrant violence, one report on the BBC considering the imperialist overtones of the song "Rule Britannia").

No articles focused on Hungary or the Netherlands; 53 covered the United States.
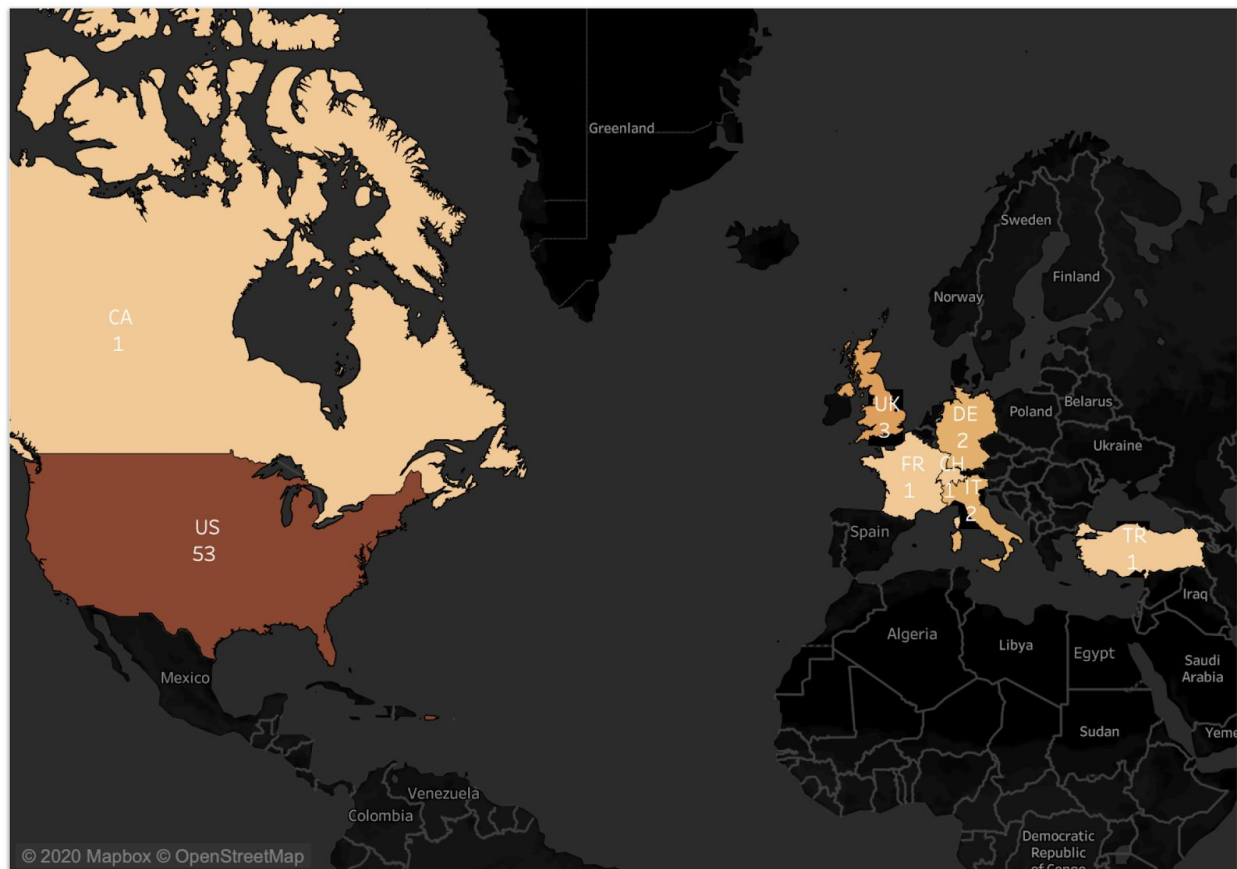
Articles on the NAEBC website, broken down according to the main country subject.

Content About Discontent

The website very largely posted content about discontent: it focused on racial tensions and violence and always presented minorities and liberals in a negative light. Headlines about the United States included:

- [Left is celebrating unprovoked violence](#): Macy's Employee sucker-punched by Black man, Company denies claim he used racial slur [apparently written by the operation, and the site's very first headline]
- [White Lives and Black Crimes Don't Matter](#): Black Minor involved in MURDER of a White Girl Receives 18 Month Sentence [apparently by the operation]
- [Seattle's cop-free CHAZ has resulted in uncontrolled violence](#), here are reasons why [apparently by the operation]
- [America's Race Reality: Inhuman, Insane, Incoherent](#) [commissioned from a freelancer]
- [Op-Ed: Leftists Want Our President Dismissed, Defeated, or Dead!](#) [copied from a blog]


Asset Alan posting anti-BLM content to Gab, September 23, 2020; this content was created by a freelancer.

Some of these articles were copied from other websites, with attribution. Others were written by apparently unwitting authors that the operation contacted. Still others appear to have been written by the operators themselves: they either carried the bylines of operation personas or were published without bylines, and they did not appear to have been copied from elsewhere online.
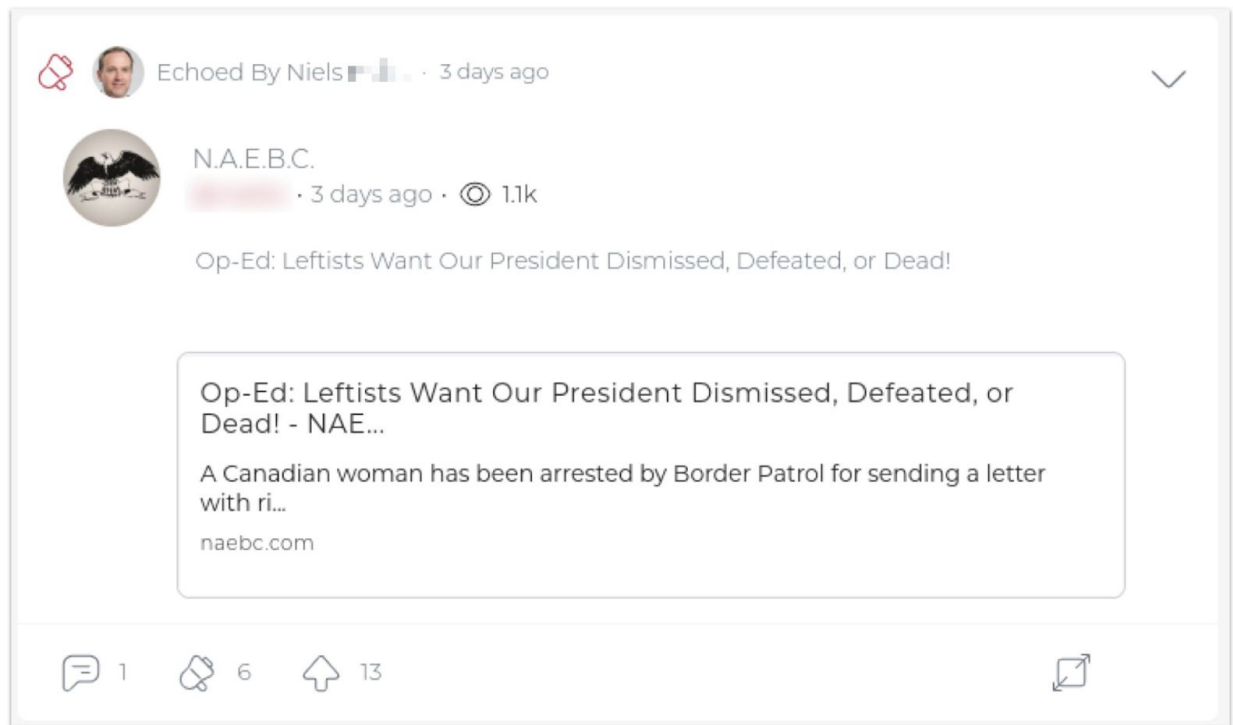
Asset Niels echoing an NAEBC post on Parler, claiming the left is planning a "coup d'etat" against President Trump; the article was copied from an American [blog](#).

At the start of the operation, the NAEBC website exclusively published content that we attribute to the operators themselves. These articles either had no byline or were bylined by operation personas, but were not copied from elsewhere online. They were characterized by unidiomatic English and specific language errors, notably confusion over the placing of "a" and "the," that have previously been observed in IRA operations (Russian does not have linguistic articles that equate to "the" and "a"). For example, early reports from the operation included the following passages:

- [We came into the time](#) where unjustifiable violence is being celebrated on social media. Unrest and discontentment are turning into pointless violence and property destruction. First it was toppling any statue of a historical person with white skin, no matter what they did. Now it's celebrating the video of punching Macy's employee. [The first paragraph of NAEBC's first article.]
- [American elites have succumbed](#) to freedom-hating violent protesters and their enablers from the Democratic Party. Will Donald Trump's second term in the office finally help us put them in restrains?
- [German Antifa stages regular violent attacks](#) on the conservative politicians.
- [The way he talked about Black Lives Matter movement](#) and antifa revealed the truly destructive impact of media on the political landscape in the US.
- [Second is the way of the Confederate States of America](#), with legal secession and a horrific war of independence. Once more, sorted out huge scope opposition at such an inconvenient time appears to be impossible.

Graphika

Between July 31 and August 10, the website did not post any new articles (having posted 21 in July). When it resumed publishing, it had undergone a fundamental change: instead of articles by operation assets, it interspersed articles that the operation had commissioned from English-speaking freelancers (discussed in more detail below) with articles that it had copied from other websites. The external sources were usually right-wing sites but also included three copies from Russian state outlet RT. Only twice after August 1 did the operation publish articles under its own byline: one concerned allegations of crimes committed by a Muslim in Switzerland, the other concerned accusations against Muslims in France. It is likely that the operation planted these posts to maintain at least the veneer of being a European outlet.
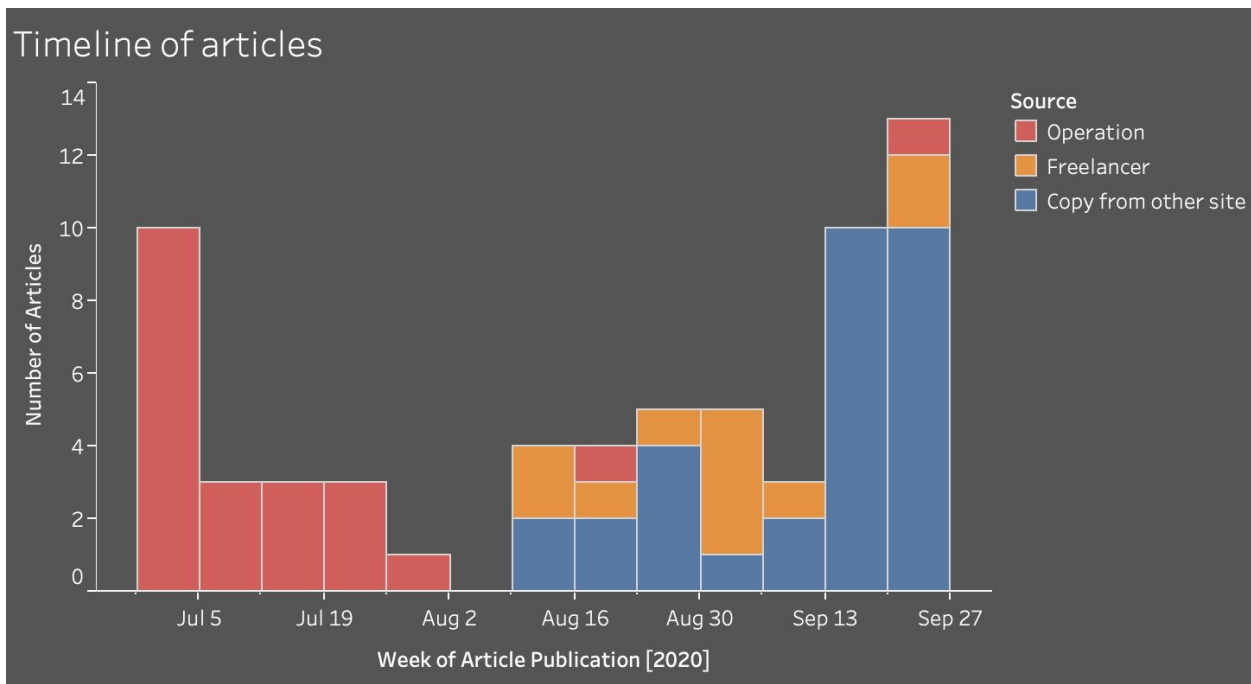

Graph showing the articles on naebc[.]com, broken down by source. In the early days, all the content came from the operators themselves. More recently, almost none did.

Alongside its web articles, the operation posted supporting commentary on its social media channels. Even more than with the web articles, this content was typically focused on American issues, especially race and politics.
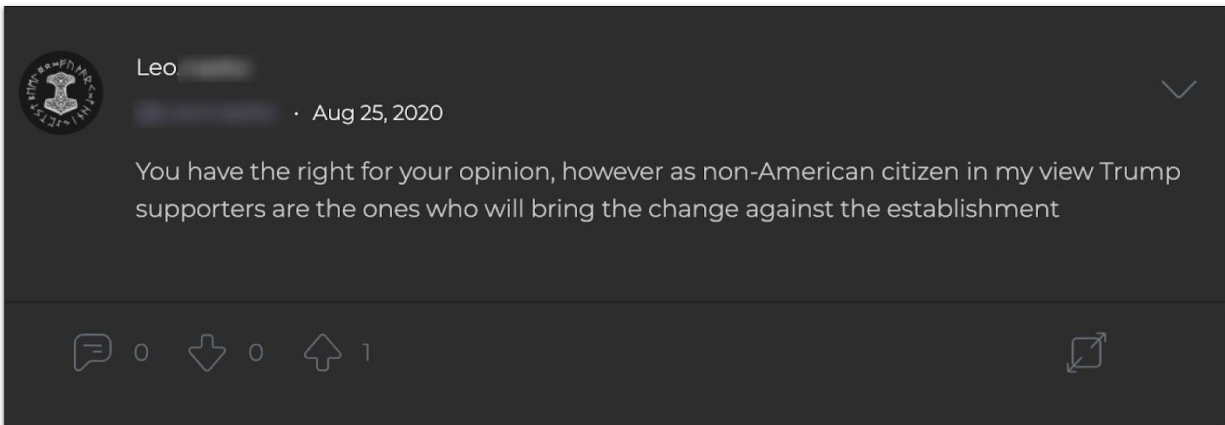
Post by persona Leo on Parler, arguing that "Trump supporters are the ones who will bring change against the establishment." Note the claim of not being an American citizen.
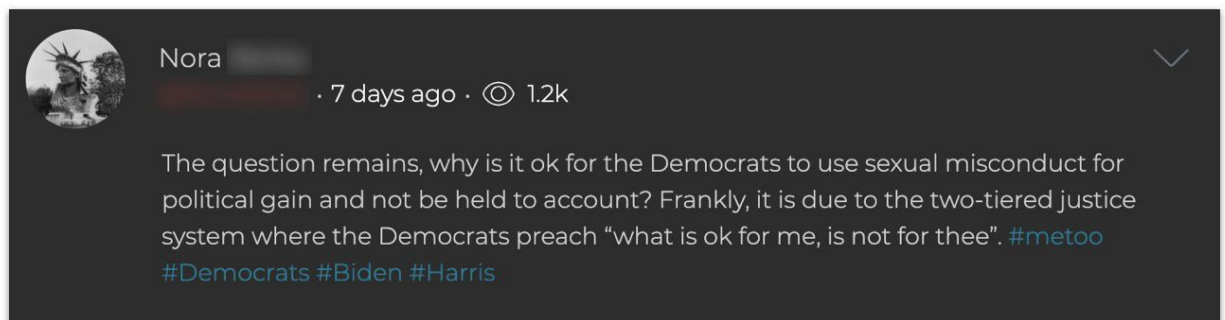
Post by persona Nora on Parler, accusing the Democratic Party of using sexual misconduct for political gain, and engaging with the #metoo hashtag.
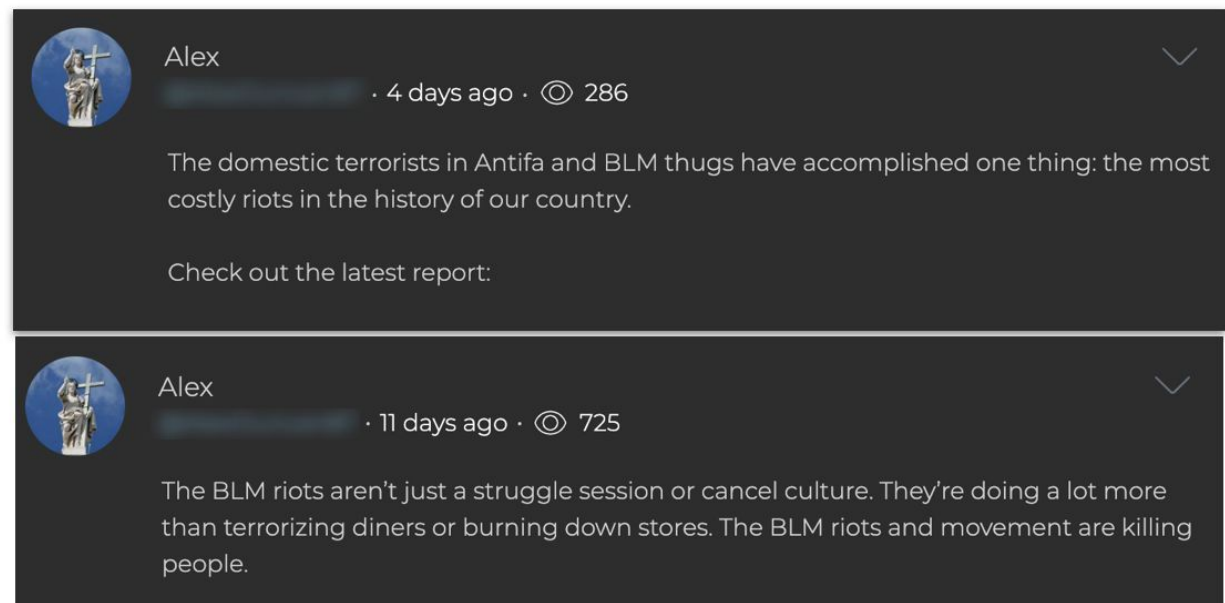

Posts on Parler by operation asset Alex, on BLM and Antifa.
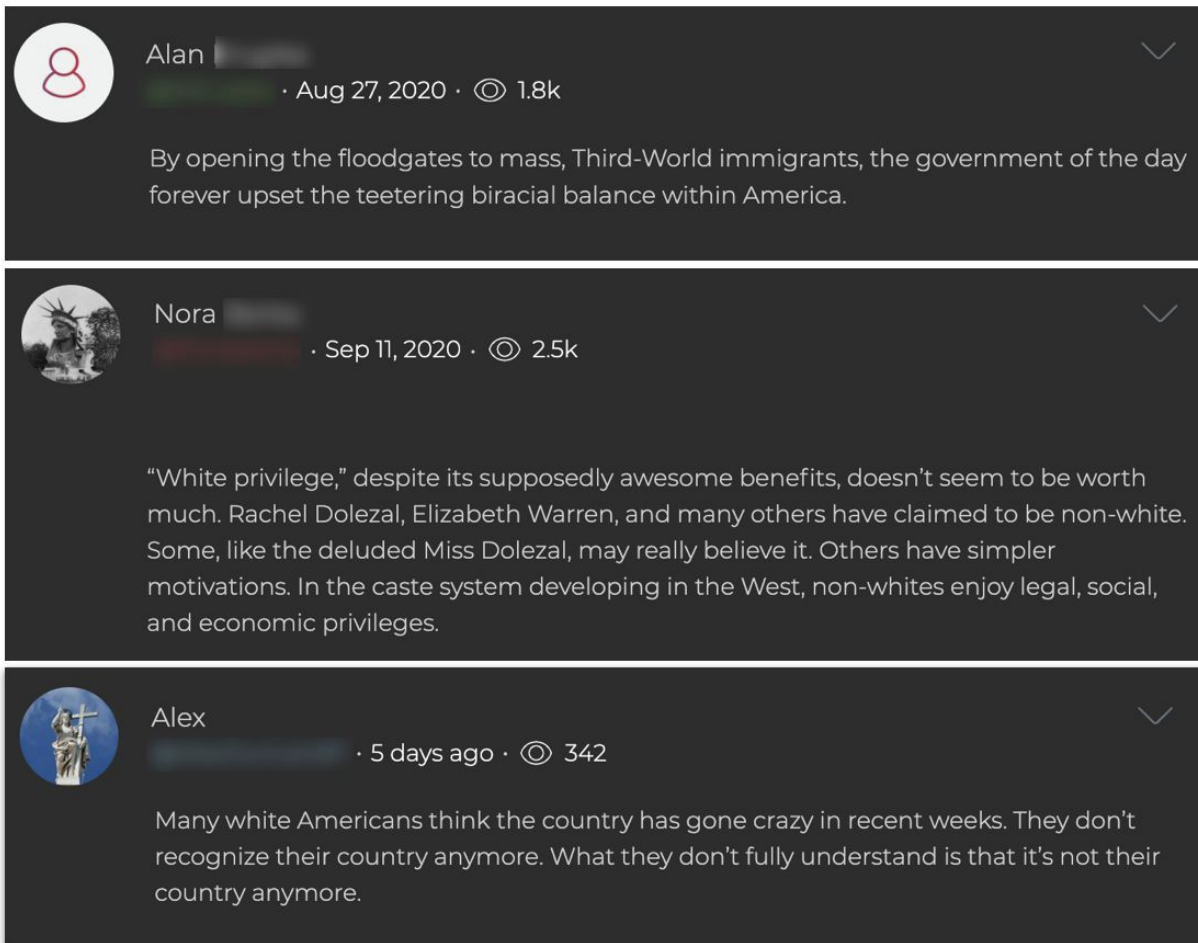
Parler posts on race, by assets run by the operation.

The operation paid particular attention to Kyle Rittenhouse, the teenager charged with shooting dead two protesters in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Two articles on the NAEBC website, both commissioned from freelancers, wrote about him in early September. One called Rittenhouse a "folk hero," the other blamed the protesters and the local authorities for the shooting. The operation's social media assets amplified that argument.
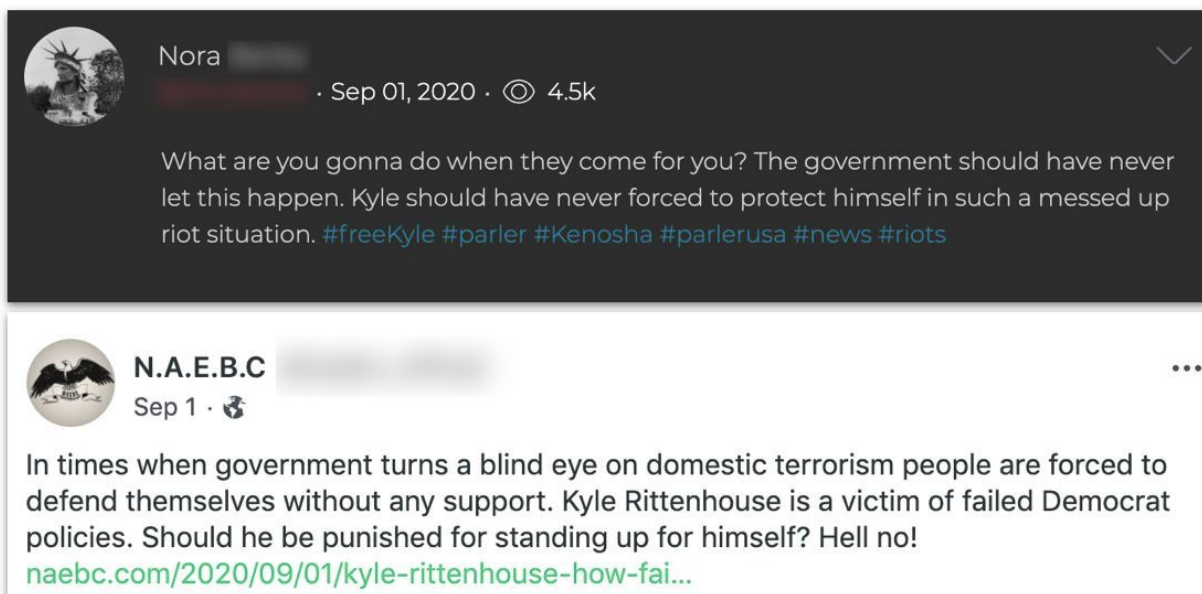
Top, Nora on Parler: "What are you gonna do when they come for you?" Bottom, NAEBC on Gab.

Little of the operation's content mentioned the election explicitly. One post claimed that mail-in ballots had been dumped and urged everyone to vote in person.
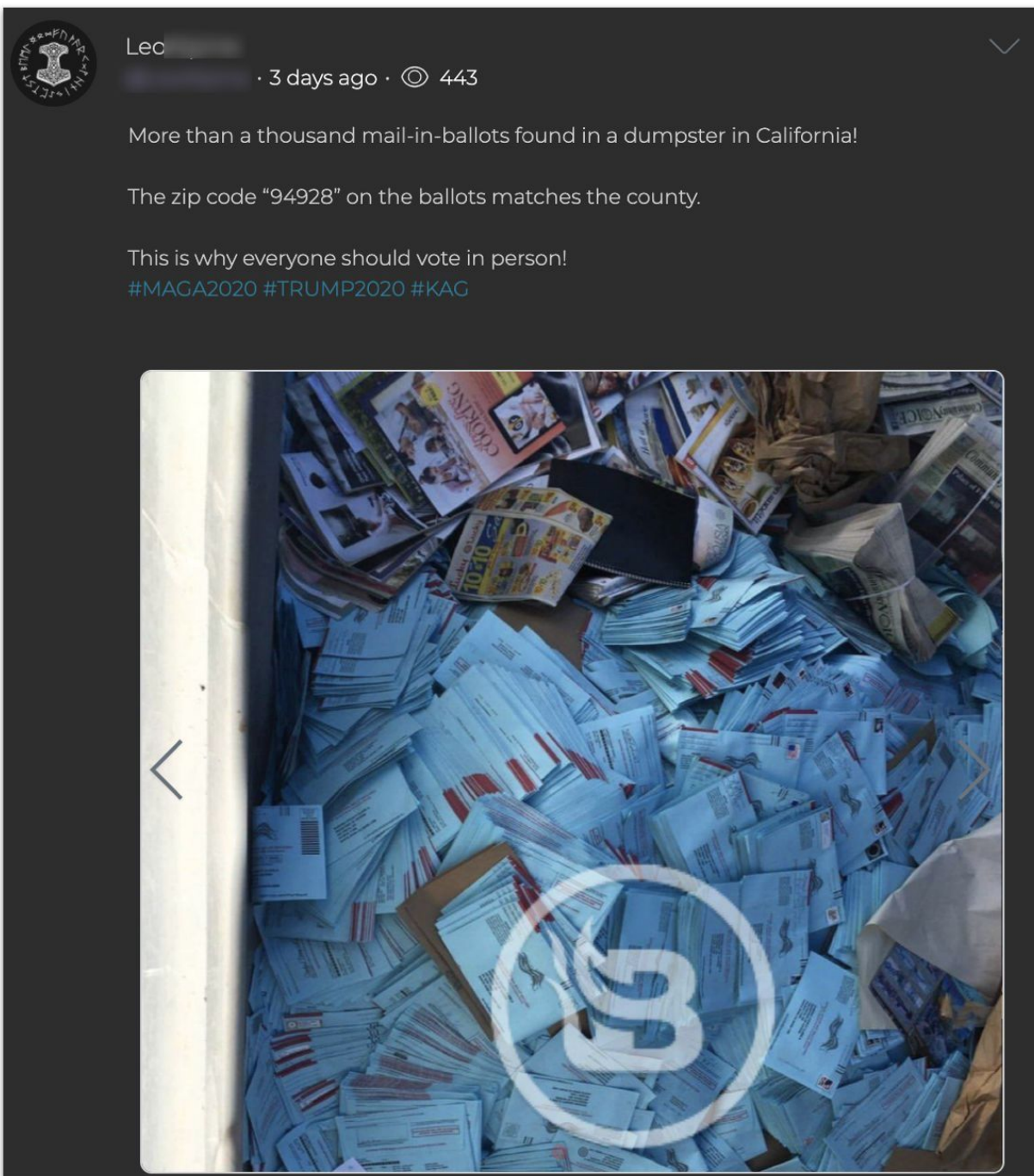
Post by Leo, September 26. The original image was posted to the Gateway Pundit, is appears that the watermark was added by BlazeTV host @ElijahSchaffer

Other posts that commented on the election were outspokenly anti-Biden and anti-Harris, and pro-Trump; one post on Gab even referred to "our pro-Trump rally," accusing "hateful leftists" of attacking it. The video footage accompanying the latter post was copied from a YouTube video posted by an authentic user the day before.
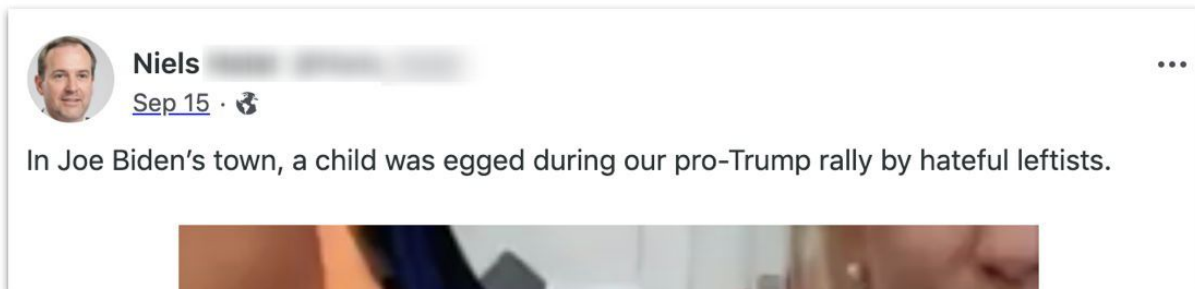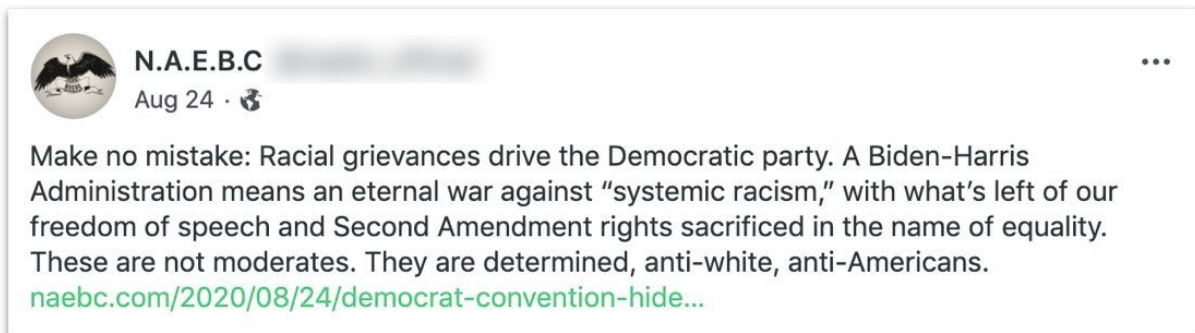
Gab posts by NAEBC (top) and persona Niels (bottom).

Overall, the tone was systematically pro-Trump and opposed to Biden, Harris, the Black Lives Matter movement, and liberals more generally. Such positions are supported by many users on Gab and Parler; as such, the operation's efforts are likely to have served two purposes. One was to build an audience on the platform by posting sentiments calculated to attract authentic users; the other was to steer that audience toward positions or actions favored by the operation, whether directly election-related or more generally divisive.
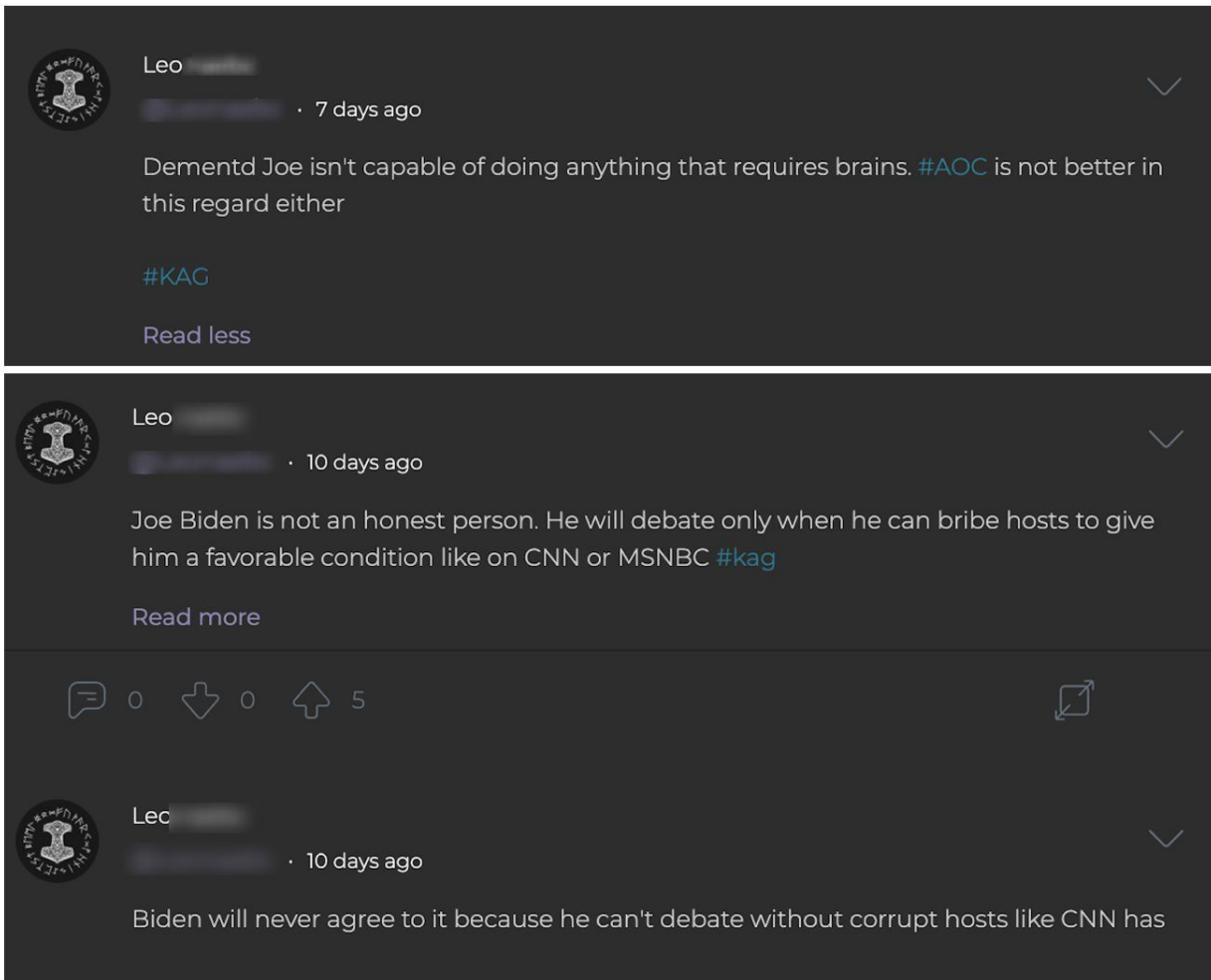
Parler attacks on Biden ("Dementd Joe") by persona Leo. Screenshots taken on September 25.
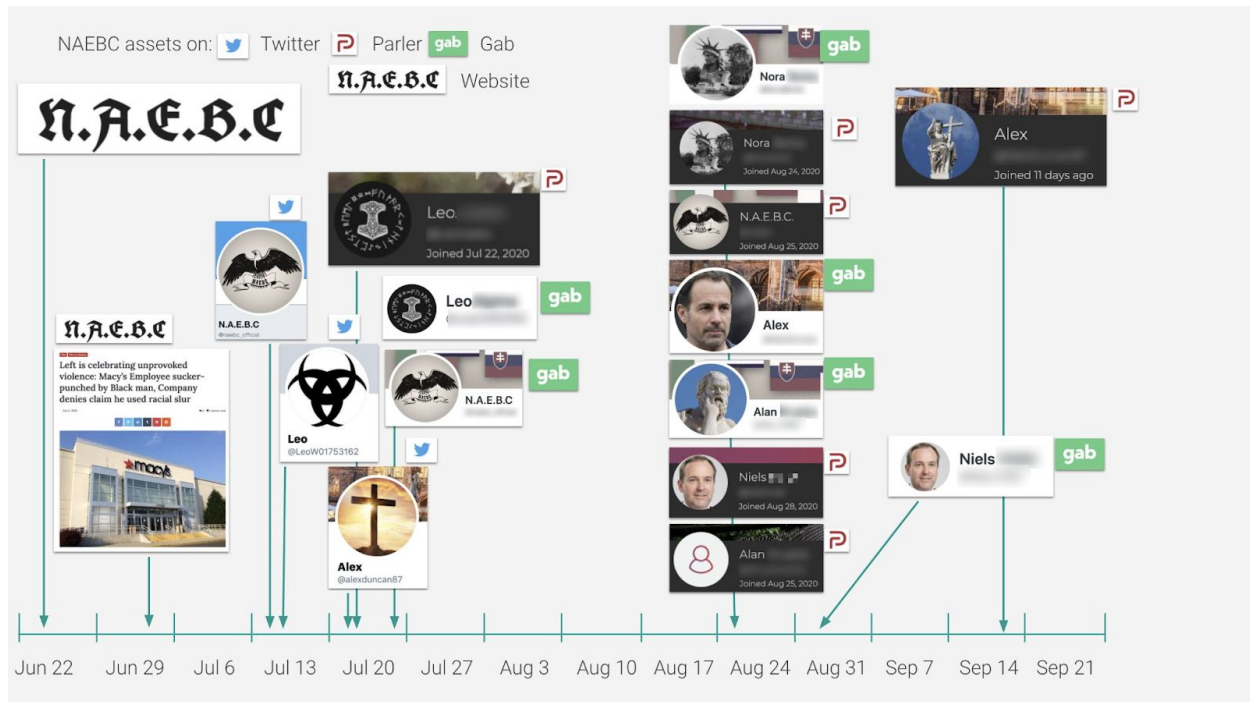
Social Media Presence

Initially, NAEBC promoted its content on Twitter. Its main account, @naebc_official, was taken down some time before Graphika began investigating, but a snapshot from August 26 remained in the Google cache. This account was created on July 14. A second account associated with the persona Nora has been suspended without trace.

Graphika identified two more Twitter accounts associated with the operation. The first was created on July 16, 2014 but only began posting on July 21, 2020: it only retweeted prominent members of the American right. The gap between creation and activation and the lack of any posting history suggests that this was a compromised account repurposed for this operation. The second, @LeoW01753162, was created on July 15, 2020; it only posted one authored tweet (July 16) and one retweet (July 22) and attracted one follower by September 28. Its authored tweet said that "we launched a new website, to continue the flow of uncensored news" after the closure of anti-migrant blog Voice of Europe. Six days later, the persona Leo began posting on Gab; one of its first two posts referenced Voice of Europe.
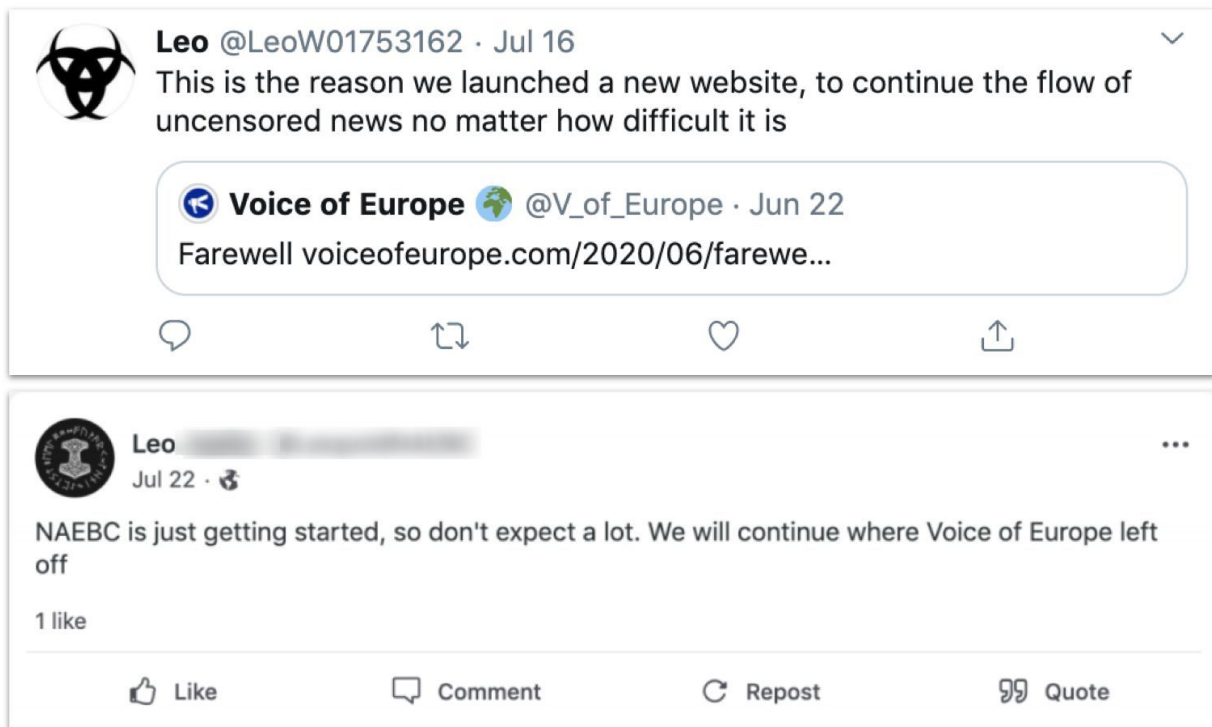
Top, the only original tweet from @LeoW01753162, July 16, 2020. Bottom, Gab post from the persona Leo on the day it started posting, also referencing Voice of Europe.

Between July 14 and July 27, the operation created or activated its first accounts on Gab and its first account on Parler. This activity did not replace the Twitter accounts: it came simultaneously, indicating that these platforms were not intended as replacements for Twitter, but additions.

Timeline of first activity of the assets in the NAEBC part of the operation, showing the major phases of asset creation in mid-July and the week of August 24.

The operation went through another burst of account creation in the week of August 24. This time it focused wholly on Gab and Parler, setting up four more Parler accounts, including an official NAEBC one, and two more Gab accounts. A further Gab account came the following week, and another Parler account two weeks later still.

This August activity came at around the same time that the FBI alerted the social media platforms to the existence of PeaceData (and likely NAEBC at the same time), and LinkedIn and Twitter began taking down their assets. It may have indicated a desire to reinforce their presence on more potentially welcoming platforms, as the major platforms began to crack down.

Despite that it was new to Parler, the operation attracted the largest following there. By September 28, just over a month after it created its main presence on Parler, the operation totaled 14,000 followers, with around 4,000 accounts following the main NAEBC account and the other personas attracting between 1,000 and 3,000 each. On Gab, the main account had 1,200 followers, and the other personas had between 150 and 800. In total, the operation had 3,000 followers on Gab.

On both platforms, however, every NAEBC asset was following more accounts than it had followers itself. All together, the Parler assets followed 22,000 other accounts, and the Gab assets followed 11,000. This suggests a degree of follow-for-follow activity, characteristic of some particularly densely connected partisan communities (such as the "Trump core" and "Resist core" networks on Twitter).
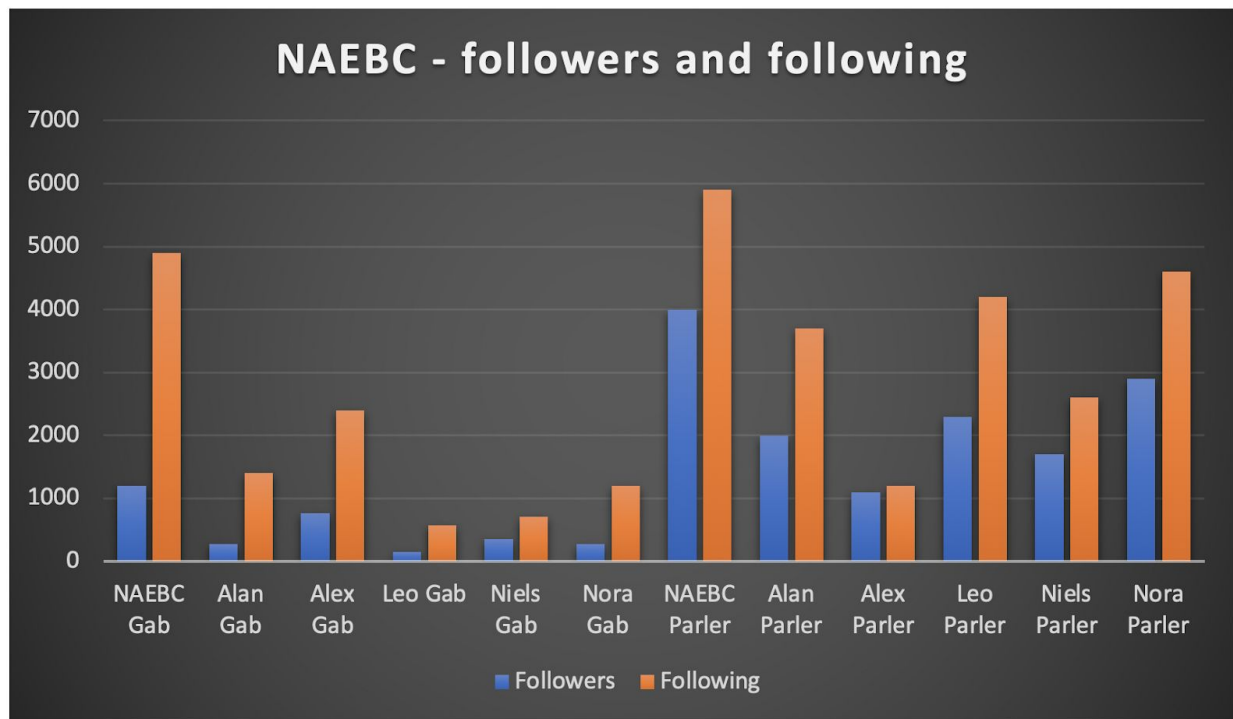
Follower numbers for each of the NAEBC assets on Gab and Parler (in blue) compared with the number of accounts they followed.

Fake Personas

At the heart of the operation lay five fake personas, each of which was active across multiple platforms:

- Alan, managing editor, ostensibly in Amsterdam
- Niels, editor, ostensibly in Amsterdam
- Nora, assistant editor, ostensibly in Gyor, Hungary
- Alex, associate editor, no location named, but banner image of Bremen, Germany
- Leopold, no location given, but commented on Switzerland and later claimed to be "from the Alps"

Three of these personas had profile pictures of apparent human beings. Alex and Niels showed these pictures on their social media assets. Nora did not, but her image remained on a Google image search for her LinkedIn account. All three appear to have been generated by the type of artificial intelligence known as Generative Adversarial Networks (GAN), a technique that has become increasingly popular among information operations since 2019. Indicators of GAN imagery include distorted backgrounds, asymmetrical features, such as ears, eyeglasses, and earrings, and the identical alignment of eyeballs in each image. Neither Alan nor Leopold had a profile picture that we have been able to discover.
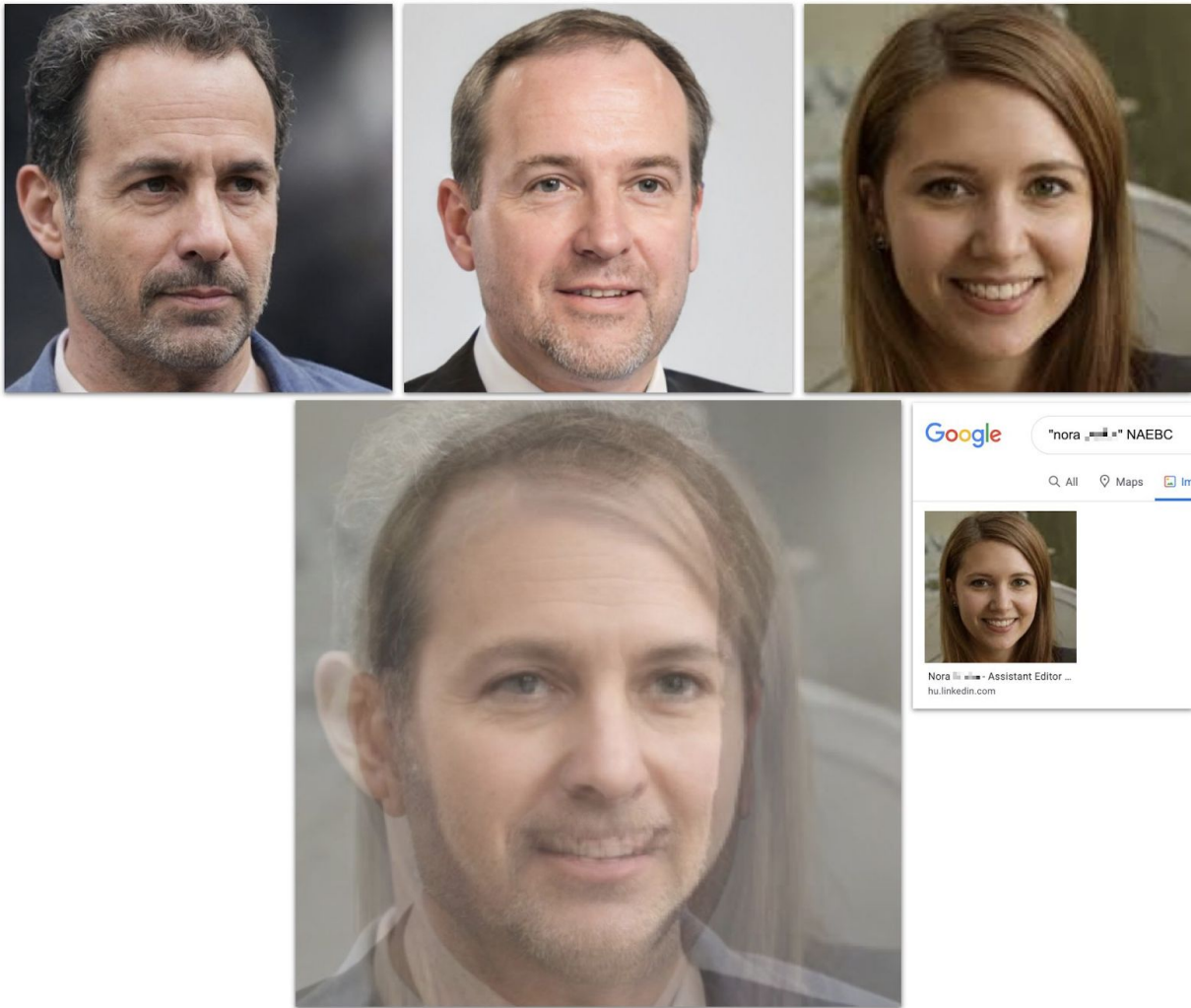
Top row, left to right: Alex, Niels, and Nora. Bottom, the three images superimposed and rendered opaque to show the alignment of the eyes, an imperfect indicator but often a telling one. Inset, screenshot of the result of a Google image search for Nora of NAEBC.

The personas did not have particularly well developed background stories. On Gab, Alex claimed to be an "Writer | Activist | Political Commentator." On Parler, Alan claimed to be a "Father of two. Permanently banned on Twitter and Facebook" (this appears designed to appeal to Parler users who really were banned). Nora said she was a "free speech activist."

That said, they took some trouble over their appearance. The Gab account for Nora, who claimed to be in Hungary, featured a photo of Budapest in the spring.
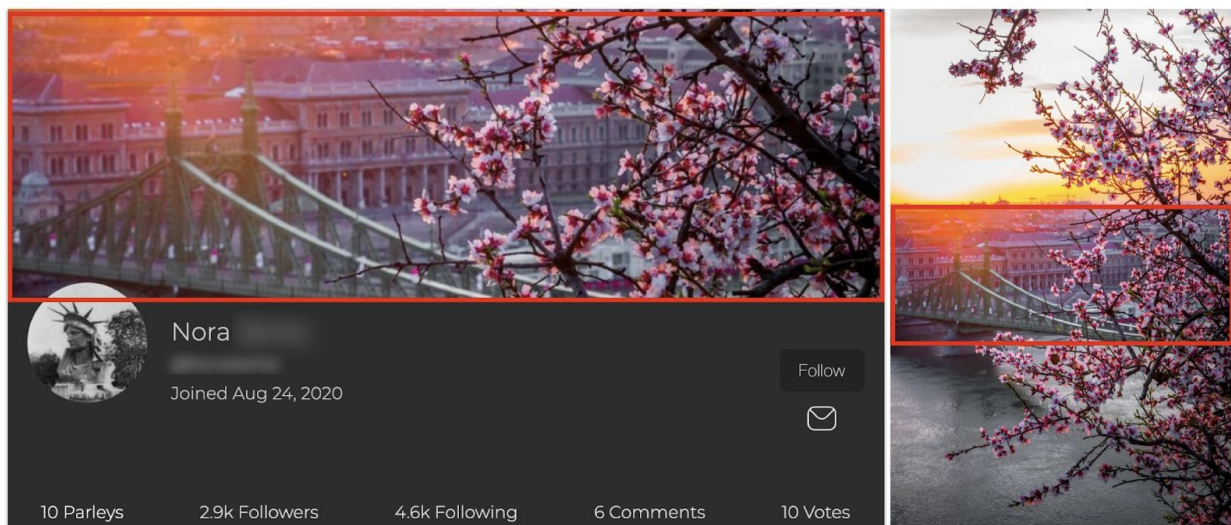
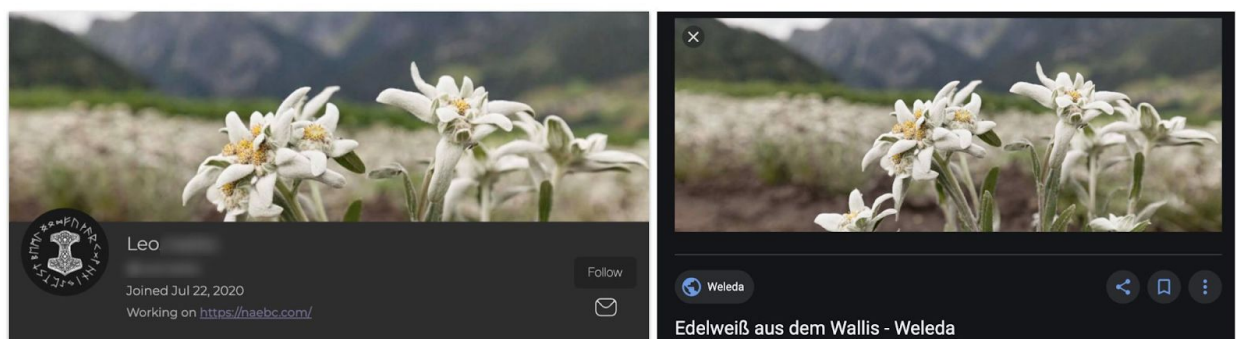*Left, Nora on Parler. Right, original [photo](#) by Daniel Olah.*

The account for Alex included a photo of the [city hall in Bremen](#), Germany, and Leo, "the man from the Alps," included a stock shot of the edelweiss.
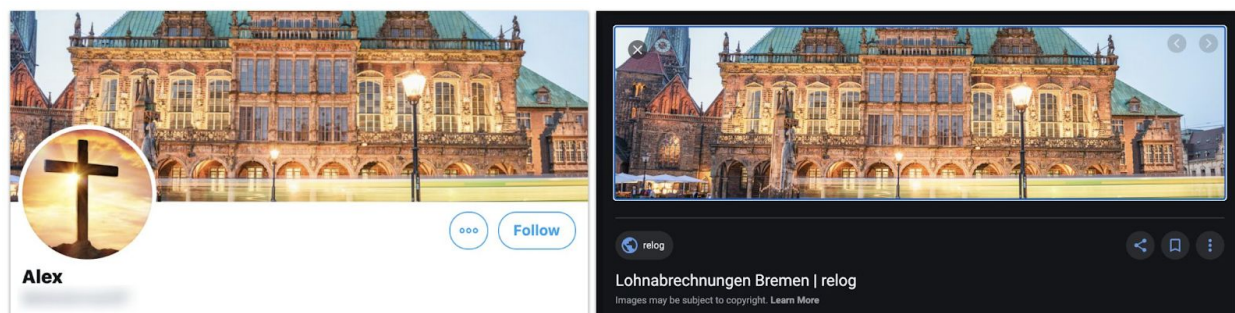
Left, Twitter profile for Alex; right, Bremen town hall.

Left, Parler profile for Leo. Right, edelweiss.

These accounts formed a tight, self-reinforcing network on Parler. Each asset liked the other assets' posts numerous times, and they all liked, and were liked by, the operation's central account. They also liked prominent members of the American right, most probably in an attempt to attract their target audience's attention. There is no indication that these attempts succeeded.

Parler "likes" network showing accounts with posts liked by two or more of the NAEBC personas (NAEBC personas in red). The thickness of the lines (edges) is proportionate to the number of likes.

Parler "likes" network showing all accounts with posts liked by NAEBC personas.

Baiting the Hook

The operation also took a more direct approach in its attempts to attract authentic American users to write for it. Across platforms, the main NAEBC accounts and the various "editors" invited users to work for them. Some of these were generic, posted on the various assets' timelines, and sometimes pinned to them.
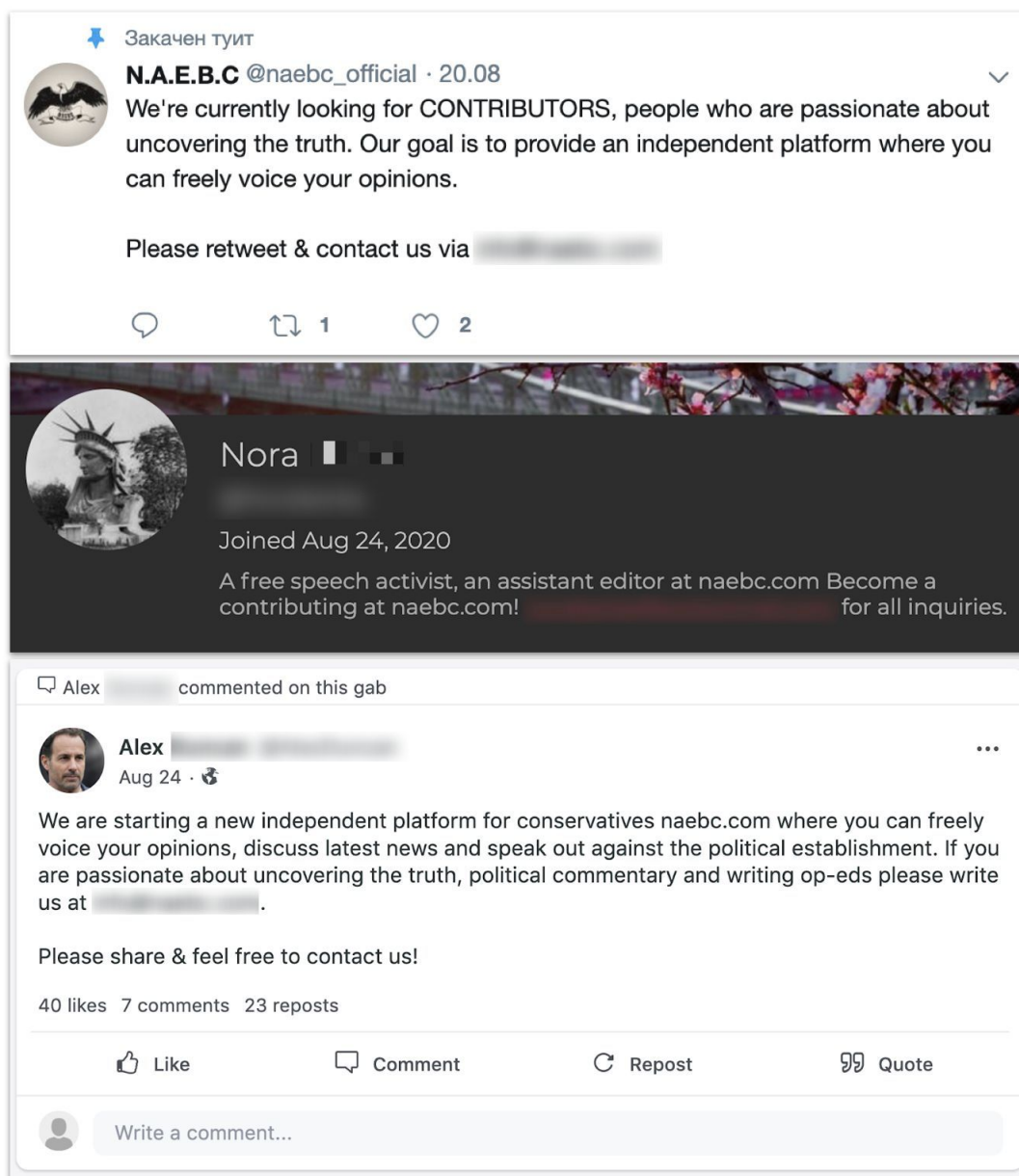

Open invitations by NAEBC on Twitter, Nora on her Parler profile ("Become a contributing at naebc[.]com!"), and Alex on Gab. We have obscured the actual email addresses.

Increasingly, however, the assets reached out directly to bloggers and other social media users, asking them to either share content with the website or write directly for it. The personas Alex, Nora, and Leopold were the most active in this regard and appear to have been the primary recruiters.
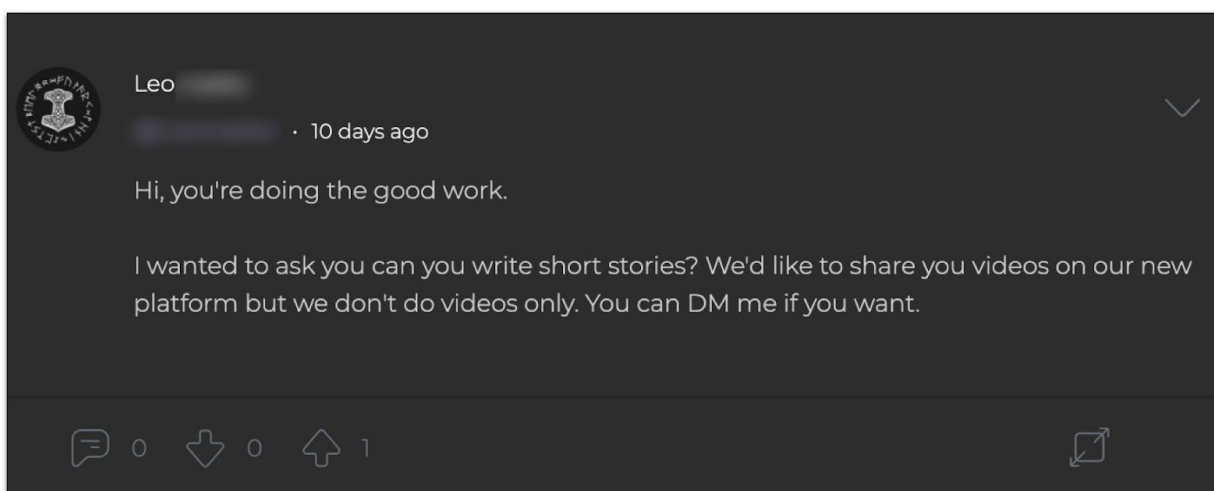

Conversation between Alex and a blogger on Gab; the blogger's first comment was a reply to the Alex post illustrated on the preceding page.
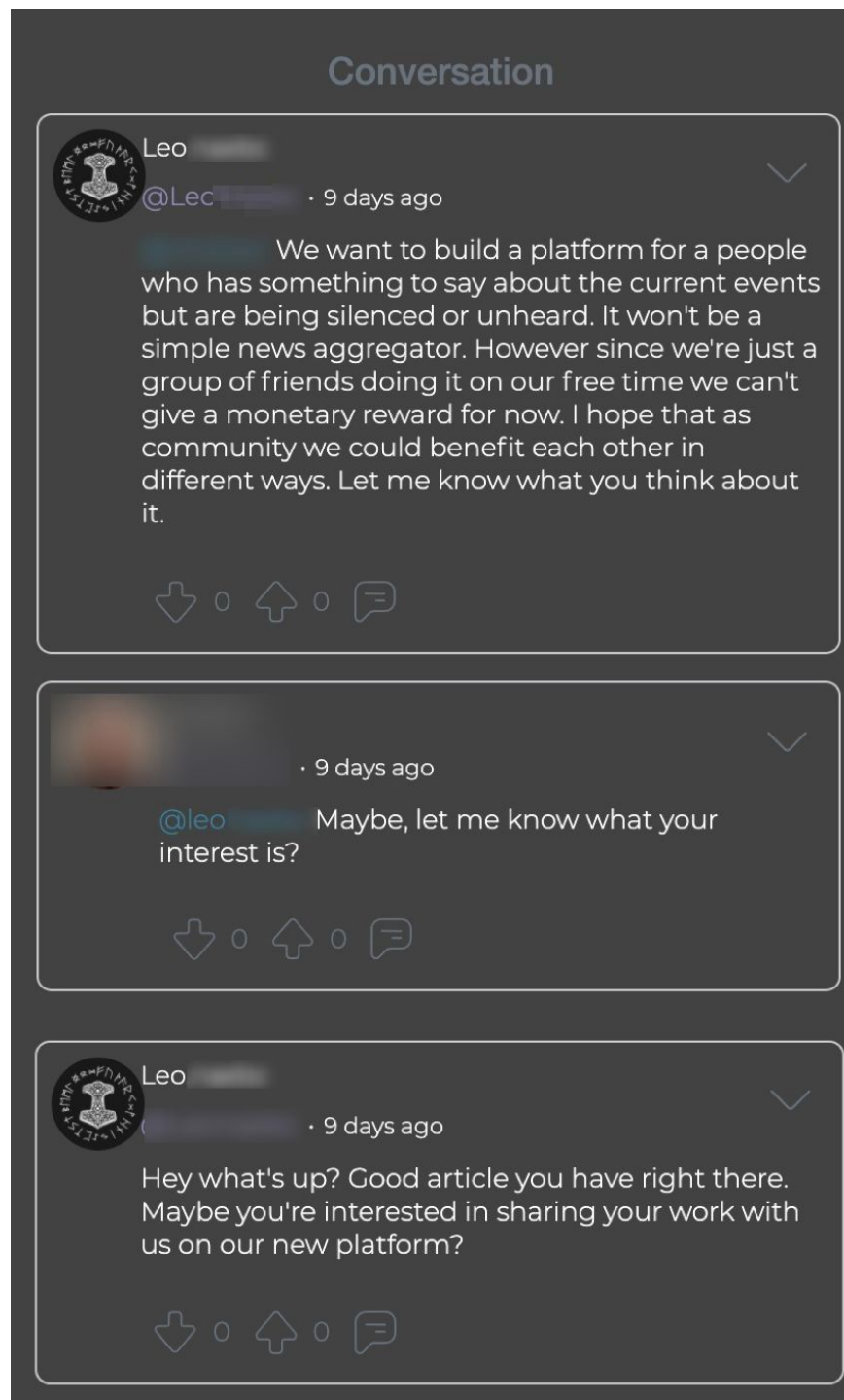
Conversation between Leo and a blogger on Parler (read bottom to top).

Post on Gab by Nora, replying to an authentic user. There was no reply to this post.

Post by Leo asking a vlogger to contribute "short stories" to accompany their videos so that NAEBC could repost them.

At least some of this outreach appears to have borne fruit. As noted above, much of the operation's content from August onward was copied from other websites and blogs; in some cases, the re-posting followed engagement on Gab or Parler. We have also identified three authentic individuals who wrote for the NAEBC website: two were established right-wing bloggers

with a strong focus on race, and the third was a novice who celebrated the publication of their first-ever article on the website.

Emails seen by Reuters showed that the operation exercised close control over the author's pieces. They suggested the topic for the writer's next article, emphasized the need to mention Democratic policies, and indicated four main lines of argument - effectively providing the writer with the structure of their article. Graphika verified the article that resulted: three of the four main lines featured in it.
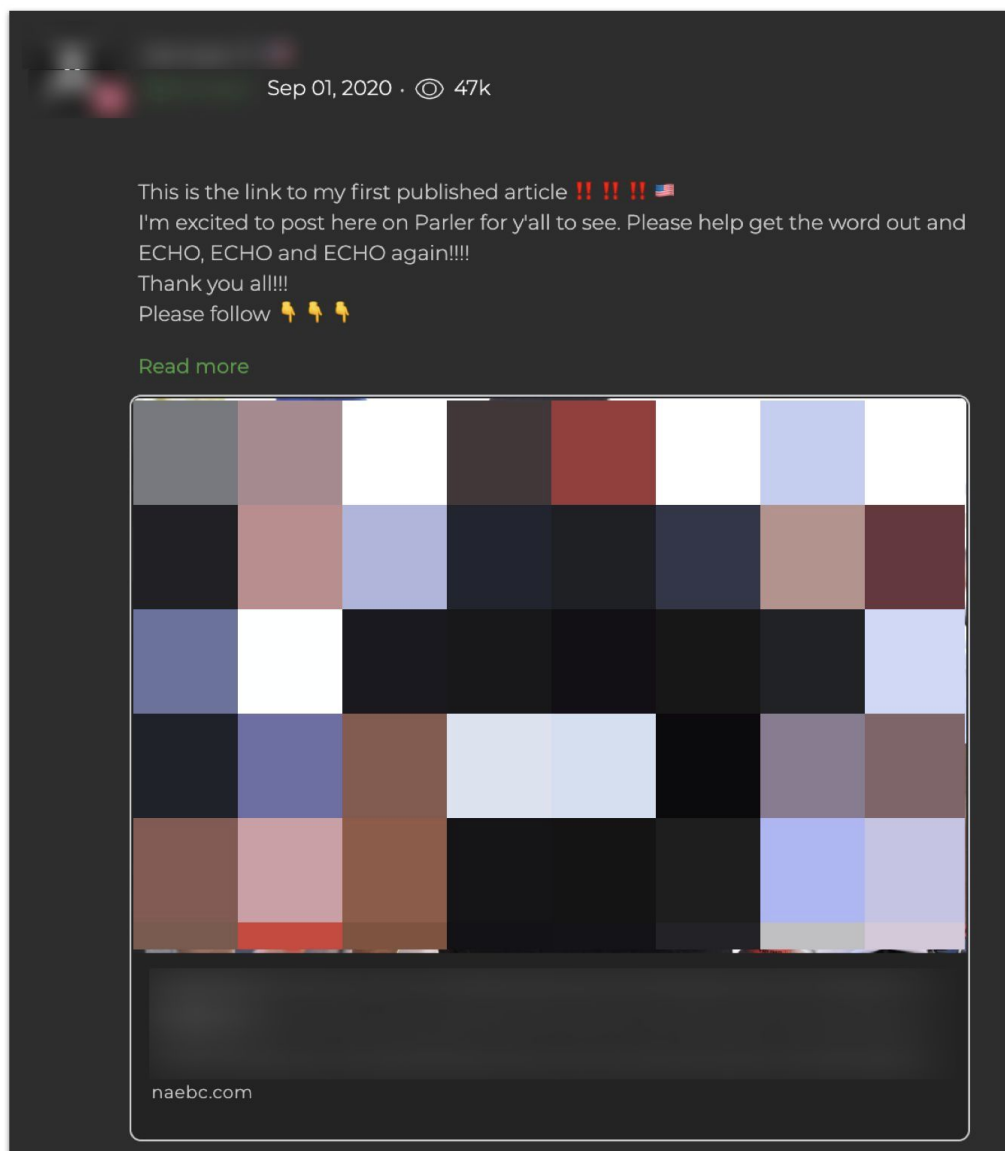

Post by an authentic user celebrating their first published article on naebc[.]com. We have obscured all identifying information to protect this unwitting user.

Guilty Conscience

On September 28, Reuters contacted the operators via the NAEBC email addresses they had provided. Within hours, the operation's personas on social media began to remove every mention of NAEBC from their personal bios.

On Parler, where it is possible to change a user's handle, Leo and Alan dropped the letters "NAEBC" from their handles. Alan removed the claim to be the Managing Editor at naebc[.]com, Leo removed the claim to be "working on" naebc[.]com, and Nora dropped her entire bio. Leo also deleted 8 of his 16 comments that had reached out directly to other users.
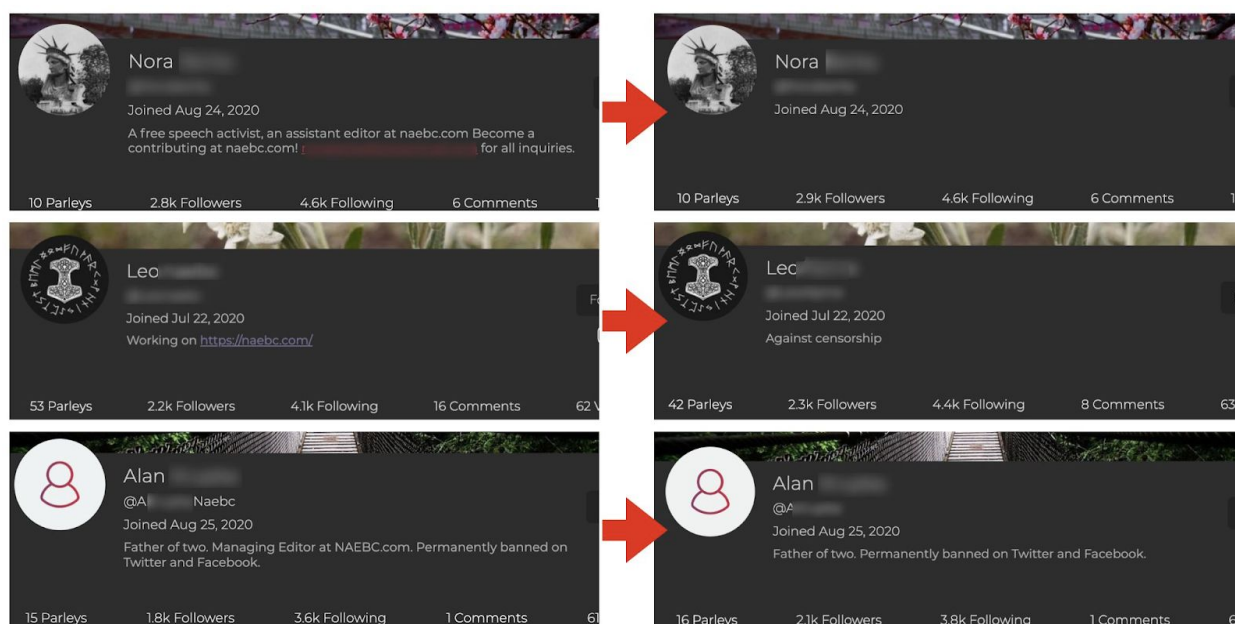
Parler profiles for Nora, Leo, and Alan before (left) and after (right) Reuters contacted the operation. Note the handle change for Alan and the systematic removal of references to NAEBC.

On Gab, fewer of the operation's assets had mentioned NAEBC in the first place, and it does not appear to have been possible to change their handles, but all those assets that had mentioned the website or the "news" outlet removed the references to it from their bios. The Leo account changed its screen name twice in a few hours. Alex removed his surname.
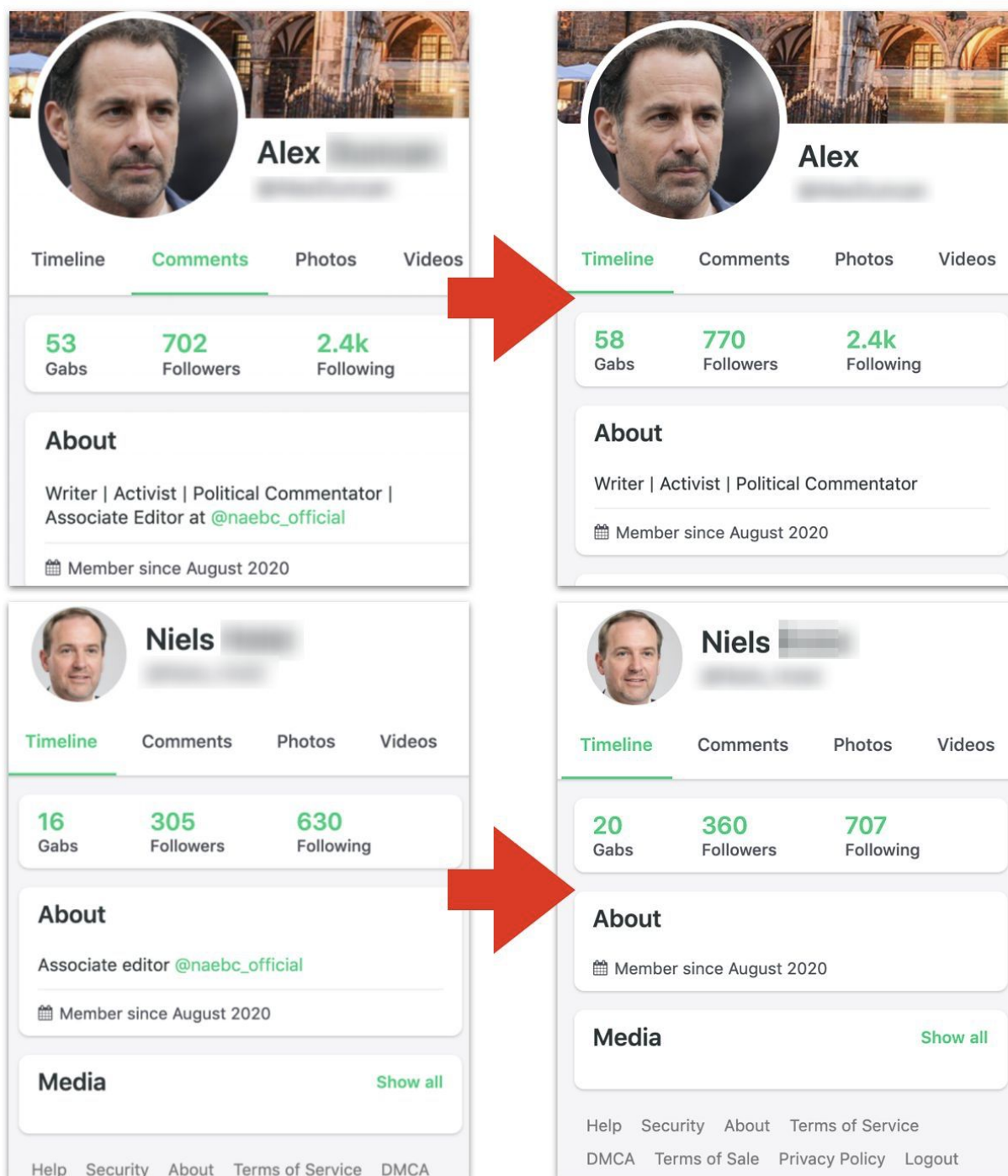
Gab profiles for Alex and Niels before (left) and after (right) Reuters contacted the operation.

As this report was preparing for publication, the NAEBC main accounts and website had not changed or reacted to the upcoming news of their exposure.

Relationship with PeaceData

All the above features identify NAEBC as an operation using false personas to target a far-right audience in the U.S. According to Reuters, NAEBC and PeaceData are run by the same actor. Facebook has attributed PeaceData to "individuals associated with past activity" by the Russian IRA.

The open-source evidence cannot provide a definitive attribution, but it does show a strong family likeness that supports the hypothesis that NAEBC is the latest in the IRA's efforts to recruit unwitting participants in operations targeting specific audiences in the U.S.[3] First is the name of the respective websites: as mentioned above, both "пиздато" and "наёбка" are Russian obscenities. In similar vein, an earlier website attributed to the IRA, called EBLA ("Eliminating Barriers to the Liberation of Africa"), approximated the Russian noun "ебля" ("f*cking"). Similarly humorous comments on the practice of "trolling" can be found in the posts:
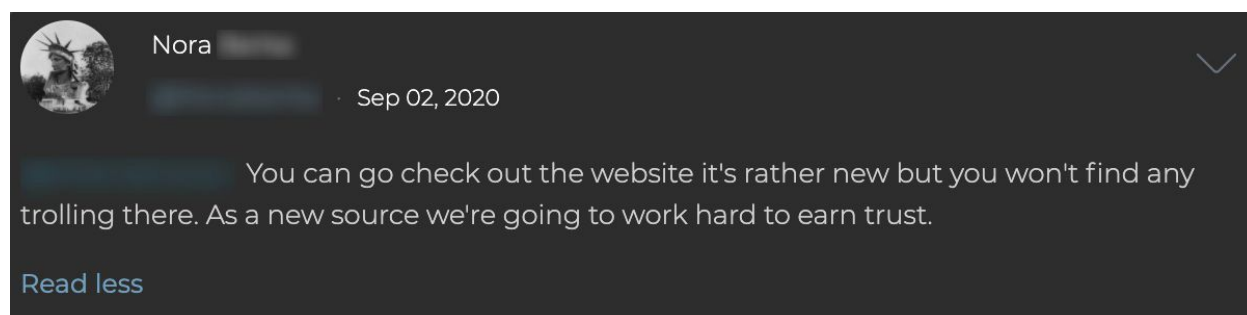

"You won't find any trolling there." Post by Nora on Parler.

The conduct of the PeaceData and NAEBC operations was also extremely similar. Both created false entities revolving around a website that was ostensibly based in Europe (Romania in the case of PeaceData, Hungary in the case of NAEBC) and that had apparent editors in the Netherlands. Both paid genuine freelance writers to provide their copy and appear to have particularly targeted writers who welcomed the chance to be published at all. Both ran personas on LinkedIn, apparently to give their assets a more professional feel.

[3] See Graphika's reports on IRA operations Double Deceit and PeaceData.
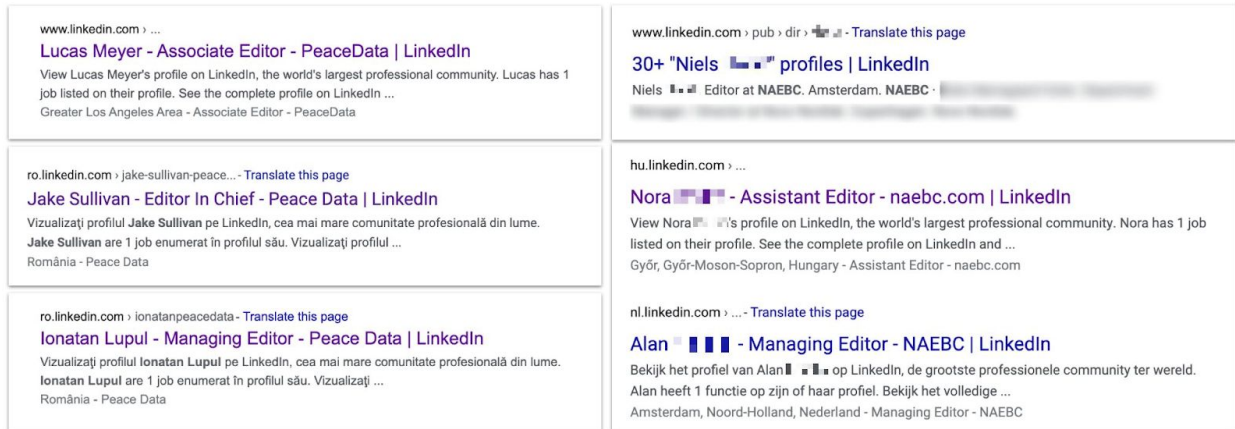
Personas from PeaceData (left) and NAEBC (right) on LinkedIn.
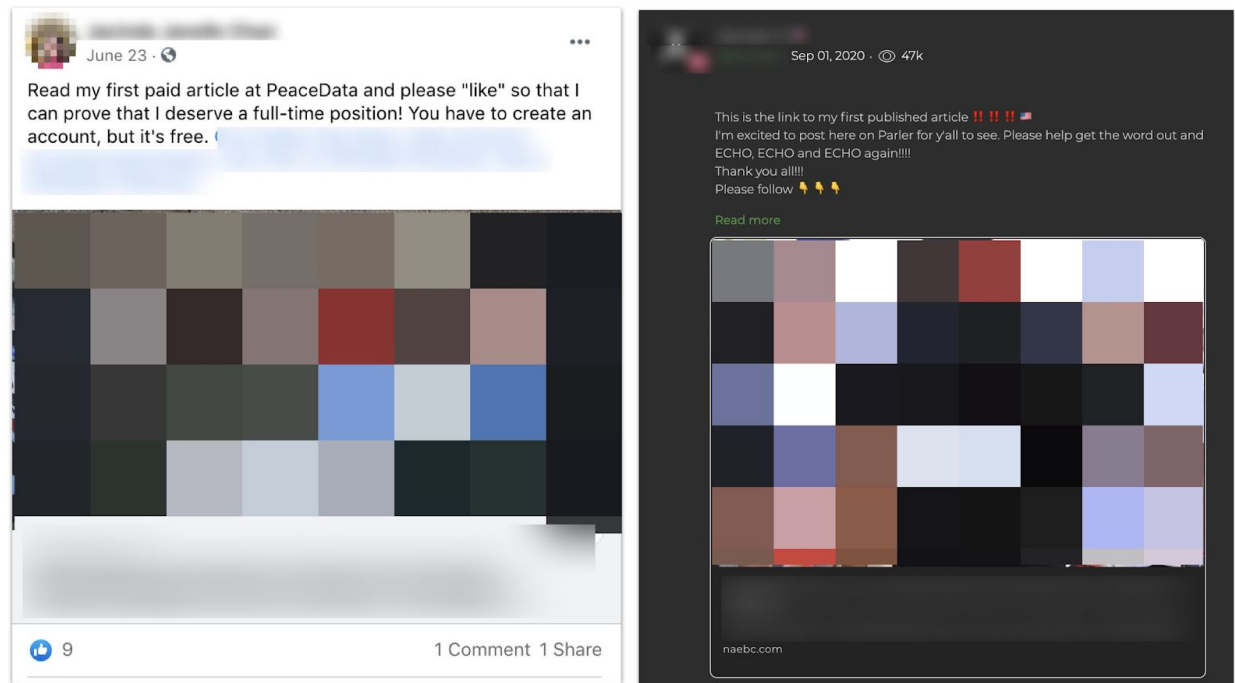
The excitement of publication: "my first paid article at PeaceData" on the left; "my first published article" on NAEBC on the right.

Both operations - or both halves of the same operation - equipped their fake accounts with fake profile pictures generated by GAN. This is not, of course, unique to Russian operations, but it is a further point of resemblance. It also bears noting that Graphika had already highlighted how many of the PeaceData set had names that began with "Al": Alice Schultz, Ali Ahmed Ghanem, Alex Lacusta, and Albert Popescu. The NAEBC set added two more, Alan and Alex.
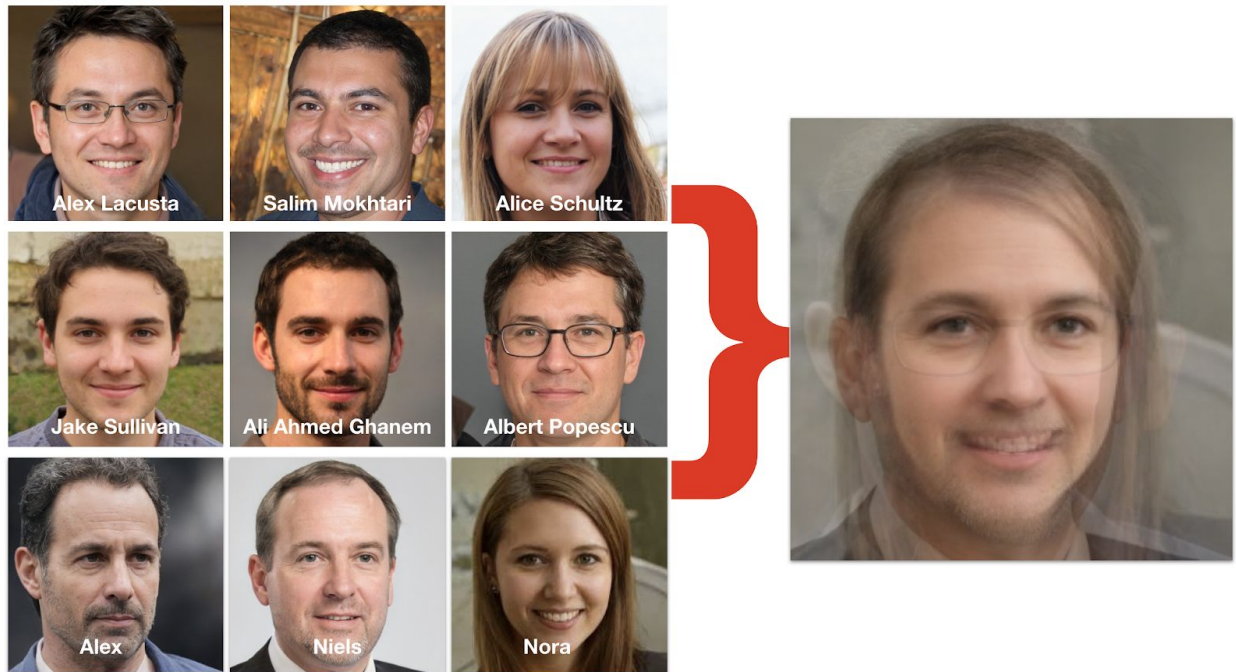
Profile pictures from PeaceData assets (top two rows) and NAEBC (bottom row). On the right, all nine pictures superimposed to show the alignment of the eyes.

Both operations also focused heavily on events in the United States, despite claiming to be European in origin. We have seen above the U.S.-centric coverage that NAEBC produced; PeaceData's content ranged more widely, but it, too, paid disproportionate attention to the U.S.
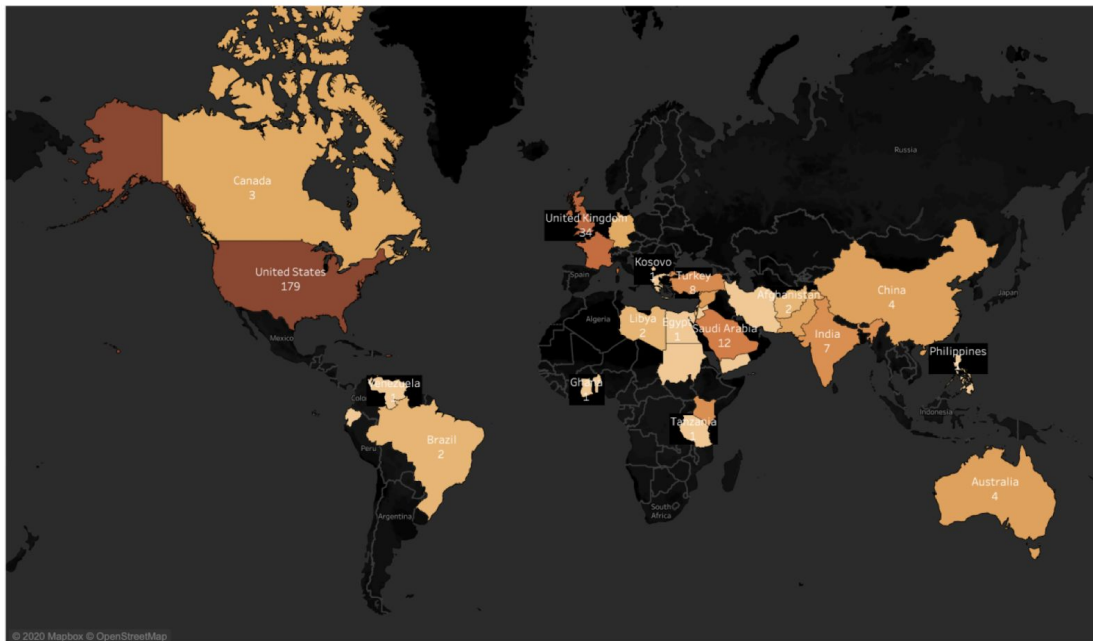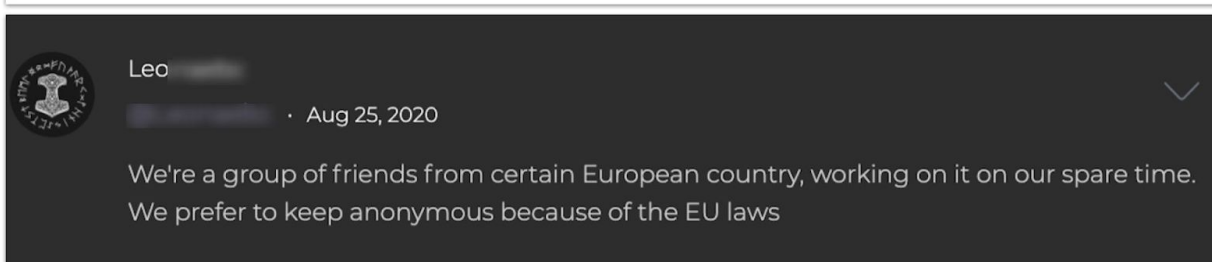

Countries mentioned by English-language articles on PeaceData.

Both provided a basic, if flimsy, cover story to explain why they were running fake personas. As we have noted, Leo claimed that the operators were a "group of friends from certain European country" who "prefer to keep anonymous because of EU laws." When it was exposed, the ostensibly progressive PeaceData claimed that it did so because its articles "shed the light on dirty deeds of many powerful and rich personalities who are willing to go to great lengths to neutralize us. Therefore, anonymity is only necessary."

It added modestly, "Not all heroes wear masks, but some are required to do so."

PeaceData is supported by our own finances and small contributions from a few compassionate readers. Articles published by PeaceData shed the light on dirty deeds of many powerful and rich personalities who are willing to go to great lengths to neutralize us. Therefore, anonymity is only necessary. We're sorry if this necessity troubled some of our contributors and readers. We apologize for that. Not all heroes wear masks, but some are required to do so.

Leo   · Aug 25, 2020

We're a group of friends from certain European country, working on it on our spare time. We prefer to keep anonymous because of the EU laws

Excuses for anonymity from PeaceData (top) and Leo (bottom).

Some behaviors were markedly different. The selection of content varied. PeaceData started out by copying content from other websites (in December 2019 through March 2020) and then progressively shifted to publishing articles by real, unwitting authors (March through September). NAEBC appears to have started out by writing its own content (in July) before shifting to the publication of commissioned or copied works (August-September). This difference may indicate different teams working on two projects or one team that started off with PeaceData and then began writing for NAEBC once PeaceData had enough freelance writers to sustain its content.

More broadly, PeaceData primarily posted on Facebook and Twitter, and it targeted progressive audiences, especially groups that identified themselves as Democratic Socialists or supporters of Senator Bernie Sanders; it posted content that was anti-Turmp and criticized Vice President Joe Biden and his running mate, Senator Kamala Harris, for being "too far to the right." In keeping with that posture, it tried to hire left-wing and progressive writers. According to the New York Times,

one PeaceData operator expressed a preference for Sanders in email correspondence with one of the freelancers.

NAEBC, by contrast, primarily posted on Gab and Parler, with some activity on Twitter; it tried to engage with a right-wing and far-right audience and to hire right-wing and far-right bloggers. It posted content that was pro-Trump and opposed to Biden and Harris, the Black Lives Matter movement, and liberalism in general.

This targeting behavior is consistent with the instructions that were given to IRA employees (the "Specialists") in 2016, according to the [indictment](#) unsealed by Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller in February 2018: "use any opportunity to criticize Hillary and the rest (except Sanders and Trump—we support them)."

The operations were still relatively new when they were exposed, and still some weeks before the U.S. election; there is insufficient evidence to prove exactly what their intention was. Given their resemblance to the original IRA, however, their purpose is likely to have been twofold: to exacerbate general tensions in the United States by posting inflammatory content to users on opposite ends of the political spectrum, and more specifically, to depress support for Biden by telling progressive voters that he was not progressive enough, while energizing Trump supporters by telling them how dangerous a Biden presidency would be.

Graphika