

SOCIAL STRATEGIC STUDIES

**INFORMATION WARFARE IN LIBYA
THE ONLINE ADVANCE OF KHALIFA HAFTAR**

MAY 2019



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CULTUR-E
DIGITAL MEDIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General Khalifa Haftar's attack on Tripoli has dragged Libya into a new civil war. Between 3rd and 4th April, the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA) from Cyrenaica launched an offensive against the forces of Tripolitania and the UN-supported Government of National Accord (GNA). In order for this operation to succeed, and for Haftar to take power, the General must necessarily build a form of legitimacy at both the local and international level. The war therefore takes place both on the military and on the political-diplomatic level. In this sense, **the quality of propaganda and the evolution of online information flows related to Libyan events are of equal importance than developments on the ground.**

This analysis focuses on the online side of the recent clashes in Libya in the period 1-14 April. Given the current Libyan context, it was decided to carry out the analysis through the perspective of **Information Warfare**, as it allows to examine the intertwining and correspondences between the development of kinetic actions on the ground and the presence of manipulation activities of the information and communicative ecosystem. **The goal is to bring out manipulative activities online**, and to underline how these can support specific perceptions of the war (both internally and internationally), as well as the ways in which they contribute to the construction of legitimacy for the belligerents, and in particular for Haftar.

Below are the main findings of the analysis.

- **The information horizon about Libya is tainted by Information Warfare actions.** More actors in the field, with different techniques, methodologies and objectives are currently active in the information ecosystem developed around the action of Haftar.
- Information Warfare activities detected can be divided into two groups: 1) **strategic activities**, of high impact and with high potential in the long term; 2) **tactical actions**, of limited impact and conducted with inferior quality and refinement.
- **The strategic activities detected are built around the action of automated informative blogs in Arabic** (such as bald-news.com, arabyoum.com, sabq-sa, alsharqtimes.com, medanelakhbar.com, uk.arabicnews.com). These seemingly independent blogs are actually part of a single interconnected network. Every day they have published an impressive number of articles in an automated way: more than 15,000 cite Haftar in the 15 days taken into consideration. The contents can be reached online and, above all, they are indexed by the Google News press review.
- If used in an instrumental way, **this network of blogs could aim to saturate the information horizon**, and then try to influence the way in which

actors are perceived on the ground. From a strategic point of view, the attempt to flood the Arabic press review of Google News with apparently independent contents can be used to **set up a precise narrative of the events, poised to be fuelled over time.**

- **Tactical actions analysed emerge on Social Media via fake Twitter accounts (fakebot), which post messages in English** (more rarely in French), substantially identical, only apparently spontaneous, and with timing that makes these account suspicious. **The study of tweets published shows the construction of a pro-Haftar narrative** (as man of order in Libya, spear-heading the fight against Daesh, al-Qaeda, etc.).
- Neither for blog networks nor for fake Twitter accounts can a specific operator, or a group of operators, be identified with certainty. However, **the narratives conveyed by these tactical activities appear predominantly in support of Haftar.** On the other hand, there do not seem to emerge specular tactical actions, that are in favour of the Tripoli front or of some of its leading figures, and as much effective and pervasive as those pro-Haftar.
- As for now, **there are two separate information universes.** The first is in Arabic, it originates from Saudi Arabia, Libya, Qatar, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, and produces almost three-quarters of the detected contents. The second consists of conversations in other languages, mainly produced by the European countries most involved in Libyan dynamics (Italy, France, UK). **So far, these two universes have not shown clear channels of contact, nor mixtures in the narratives conveyed.**
- However, considering both the possibility of a protracted war and Haftar's strategic objective (acquiring international legitimacy), it is reasonable to expect an increase in hybrid actions in the near future. **The emergence of strategic activities, including in non-Arabic languages, is also expected.** In particular, **an increase in Information Warfare actions aimed at presenting Haftar's attack in the framing of the fight against terrorism appears particularly likely.** This is both for internal purposes and for gaining legitimacy before the international community.
- Given the multiple interests of Italy in Libya, the commitment of Italian diplomacy to support the Government of National Accord in Tripoli, and the presence of Italian soldiers on the ground (mission MIASIT), **it cannot be excluded that in the near future such hybrid actions will also hit the digital information horizon related to Italy, in Italian language too.**

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I. INTRODUCTION

On April 3rd, General Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive on Tripoli. Some units from Cyrenaica, framed in the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA), occupied the strategic city of Ghariyan and marched on the capital's southern outskirts. Haftar's objective was to quickly conquer Tripoli, relying on the rivalries among the dozens of local militias, and to overthrow the Government of National Accord (GNA) led by Fayeze al-Serraj and supported by the United Nations. In fact, Haftar has always aimed to get a leading role in the post-Gaddafi era, alternating dialogue and diplomacy with the use of force. This enabled him to get more leverage during negotiations (for example, by taking control of almost all of Libyan hydrocarbon basins, pillars of the national economy).

However, faced with such an attack, armed groups in Tripoli soon put aside divisions, coordinated their actions and managed to block the advance of the LNA, also thanks to the military support from the powerful Misurata militias.

Against this background, the current Libyan scenario appears to be particularly permeable to Information Warfare actions, aimed at creating a synergy with the war operations and at supporting the agendas of the different rival actors involved in the conflict. In fact, after the first 48-72 hours, clashes stalled with no significant successes on either side. The fight then moved to the political-diplomatic level. In fact, both sides can count on numerous international sponsors. Although formally the entire International Community recognizes only the GNA as the legitimate government, many countries have been following a double track for some time, coupling more selective, opaque and "covered" channels to the official ones.

Specifically, Haftar and LNA can count on logistical-military support by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), political support from Saudi Arabia, a good relationship with Russia, and an important *liaison* with France. Serraj and several GNA-affiliated militias can count on military and political support from Turkey and Qatar. Italy, the UK and Germany are among the most active political supporters of the UN-sponsored GNA. The United States tends to read Libyan dynamics through the security prism of countering terrorism, leaving the political-diplomatic game in the background. Thus, both the Arab world and the European Union are internally split and unable to pursue a common agenda to tackle the Libyan crisis.

These divisions have played a crucial role in slowing down the Libyan reconciliation process led by the UN that started 4 years ago. This process has been deeply



undermined by Haftar's offensive, since the latter appears to have wasted the capital of trust between the parts accumulated since 2015.

In this sense, the most important confrontation between Haftar and the GNA is played on the level of legitimacy. Indeed, in order for the LNA offensive to achieve its political goals, military victory must be accompanied by parallel international recognition of Haftar. The construction of a form of legitimacy is therefore one of the primary objectives of the General's offensive, and as much important as military operations and the maintenance of international support.



II. OBJECTIVE OF THE ANALYSIS

The present analysis is conducted within the framework of Information Warfare, through which it is possible to systematize the complex horizon of the current Libyan situation. The objective is twofold. The first is to rearrange the online information landscape related to Khalifa Haftar and produced in the early days of the offensive. The second is to explore the possible presence of Information Warfare actions. In particular, the analysis will deal with 4 research questions:

1. What features does the online information ecosystem have?
2. Which themes emerge as relevant in online conversations?
3. Which are the most active or relevant actors online?
4. Is it possible to identify anomalous activities in the discussions?

III. THE ONLINE HORIZON OF LIBYAN EVENTS

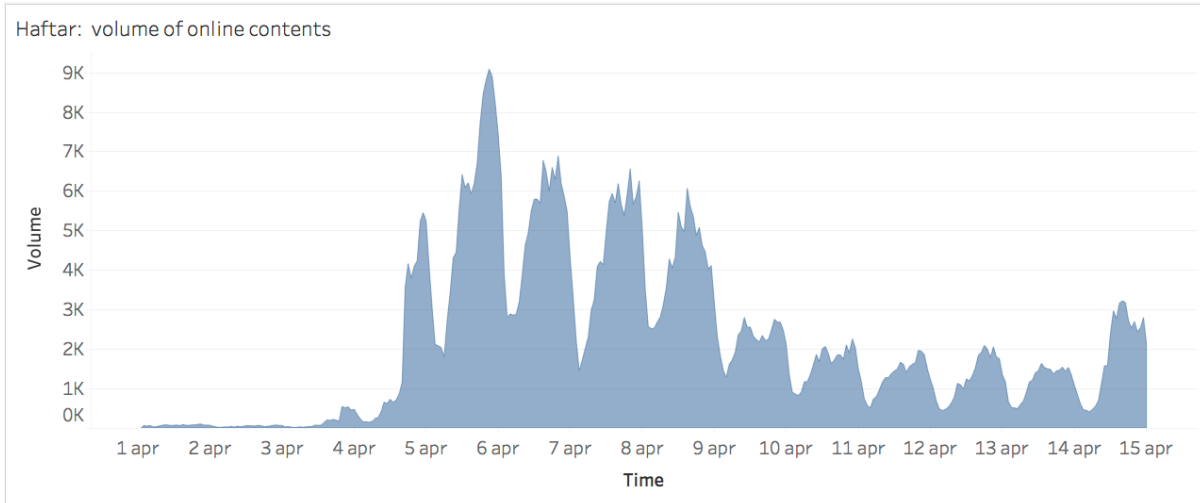


Table 1: Trend of volumes–contents published online in the period of concern

Conversations and content produced on the web related to Haftar (name or hashtag, in western or Arabic languages) have been detected and aggregated through the Talkwalker platform. The research deals with the volumes produced online between 1st and 14th April 2019.

Over 735,000 contents emerged, as represented in table 1. The trend follows the initial phases of the Tripoli offensive between 3rd and 4th April, with a first peak on the morning of 4th April. Some peaks of particular content production emerge on some key dates: Haftar’s announcement of the official start of the operation, re-named “Flood of Dignity” (*taufan al-karama*), on the afternoon of April 4th; clashes at Tripoli international airport, a strategic point for the control of the capital, on 5th and 6th April; Haftar’s visit to Egypt on April 14th. Key days are also confirmed by the analysis of the trend of the over 4.2 million reactions detected in the period under consideration. The 3 contents that recorded the greatest number of interactions are: [Ennahar TV](#) (2.8k Fb shares, 10.4k like Fb, 10.3k comments); reportage by [L’Espresso](#) “I am 16 years old, I am a prisoner in Libya. Please help me ”(501 Tw shares, 17k Fb shares), [Russia Today - RT](#) (28 Tw shares, 14.1k Fb shares).

IV. ANALYSIS OF VOLUMES

The dataset related to the published contents is further explored along variables that are crucial for understanding the structure of the specific online information ecosystem. The first variable concerns the languages most frequently found in the contents (table 3).

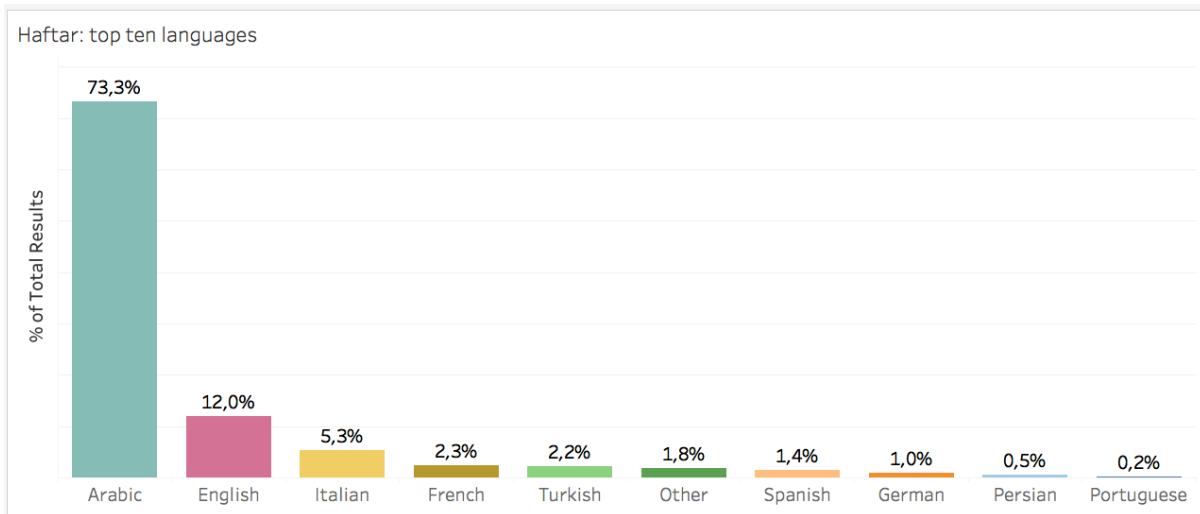


Table 3: Language distribution

Within the 10 most widespread languages, Arabic ranks first with almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the volume (73%), followed by English (12%), Italian (5%), French (2%), Turkish (2%), Spanish (1%), German (1%), Persian (0.5%), Portuguese (0.2%), other languages (1.8%).

Exploring the daily distribution of this ranking no isolated peaks emerge, but it is certainly possible to note an immediate interest in the contents in English (see 5th April) and an increase in the volumes of contents in Italian starting from 12 April (blue line, with values similar to those of the English language between 13 and 15 April).

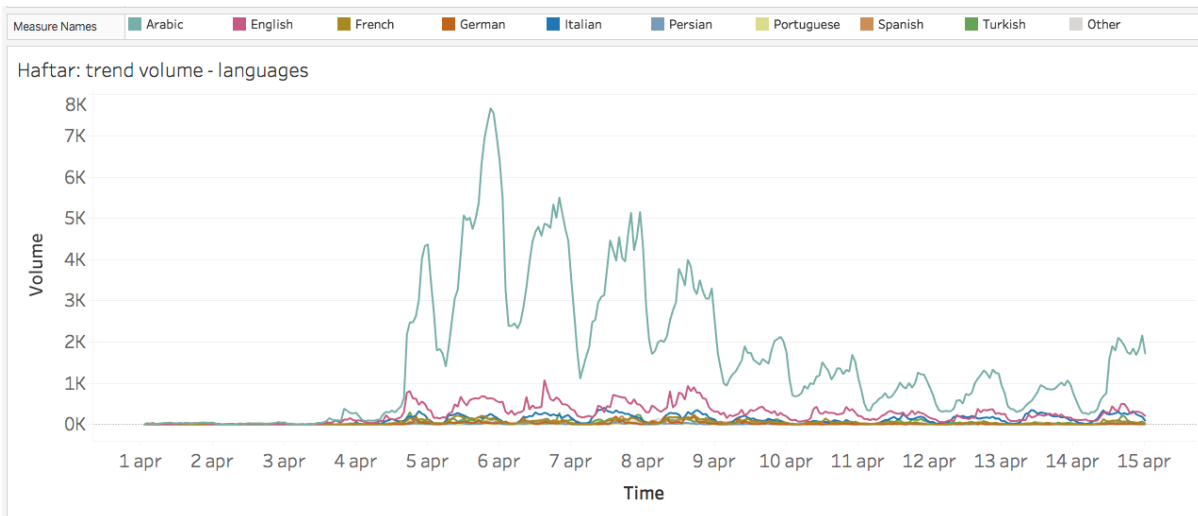


Table 4: Daily distribution of languages

It is possible to further explore the dataset through the geographical distribution of the contents detected. The map shows the countries of origin of the published messages, the chart shows the ranking of the first 10 countries (tables 5 and 6).

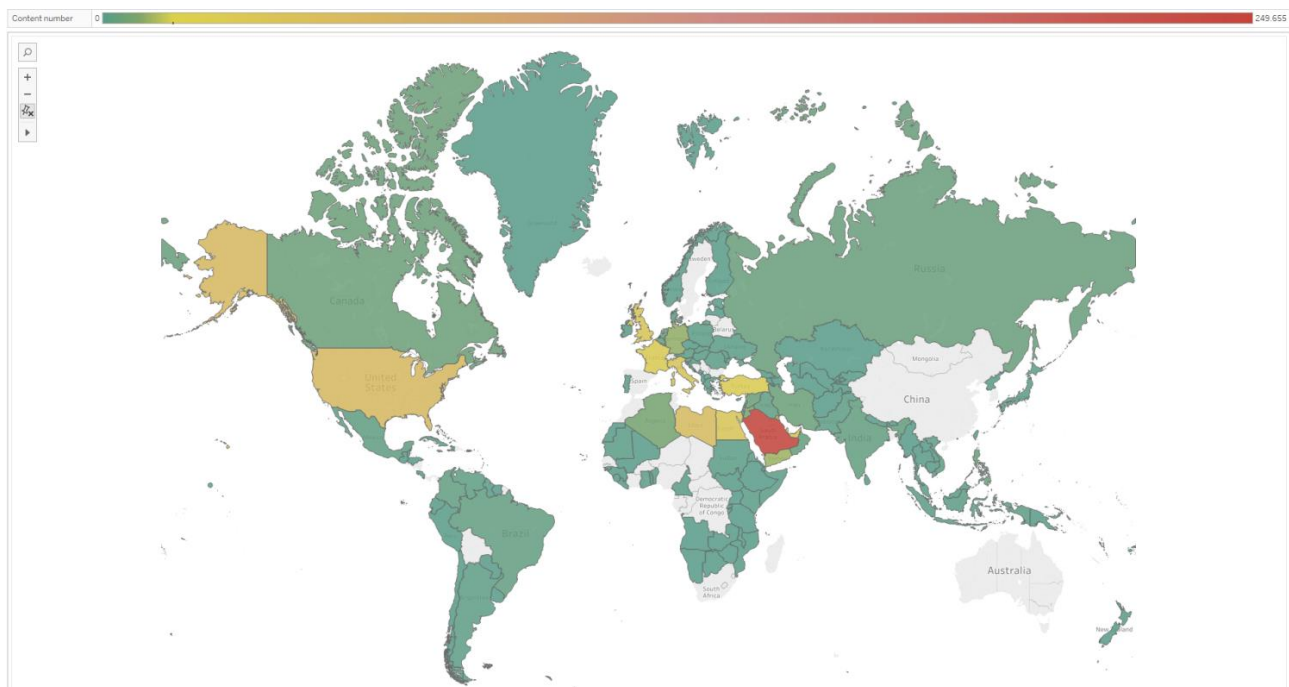


Table 5: Geographical distribution of contents (green=lower, red=higher)

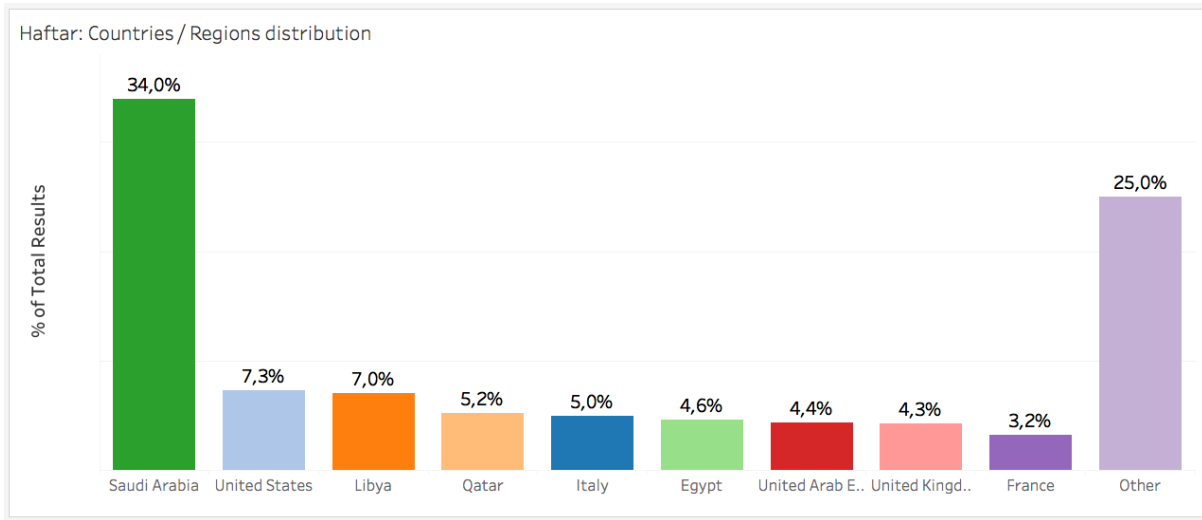


Table 6: Top 10 countries as for contents published

34.1% of published content comes from Saudi Arabia, 7.3% from the United States, 6.9% from Libya, 5.2% from Qatar, 4.9% from Italy, 4.6% from Egypt, 4.4% from the UAE, 4.3% from the UK, 3.2% from France (the remaining 25% comes from other countries with a concentration below 3%).

V. DIFFERENT THEMES, A SINGLE COMPLEX PANORAMA



Table 7: Tag cloud of the 50 most relevant key words

The tag cloud (table 7) represents the 50 most relevant keywords in the period under consideration. Hashtags emerge in English (#libya, #tripoli), and meaningful words in Arabic. Among these “national”, referring to the LNA together with الجيش (army) and الليبي (Libyan); “accord” / “unity”, referred to the GNA; “terrorism”, used to characterize Tripoli forces; قطر and #قطر, Qatar; #الإمارات, United Arab Emirates. Significantly, in French emerge maréchal (Marshal, referred to Haftar) and nationale (national in the acronym LNA, in French Armée Nationale Libyenne).

A study of the temporal distribution of some of the main hashtags spontaneously associated with the keywords searched shows the development of online conversations and the reactions to the unfolding of events. Particularly relevant is the emergence on April 6 of the hashtag #حرة_مطار_طرابلس (green line, “#Haftar_frees_Tripoli_airport”), coinciding with a phase in which the infrastructure was particularly disputed between rival forces (table 8).

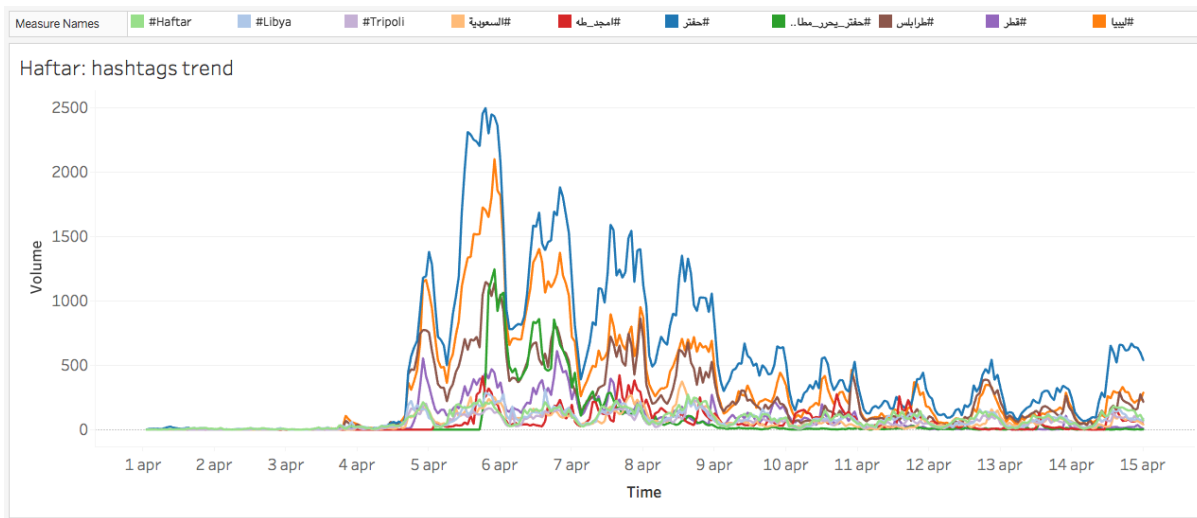


Table 8: Temporal distribution of hashtags associated with contents detected

An analysis of the main domains shared in the published messages delineates a communication horizon dominated by information platforms and social channels: Youtube comes first, followed by rt.com (here also including the Arabic version), sputniknews.com, reuters, aljazeera, twitter, arabi21.com, alarabyia.net, france24.net, repubblica.it. The chart shows the ranking of the 10 domains whose links were most frequently shared in the messages (table 9).

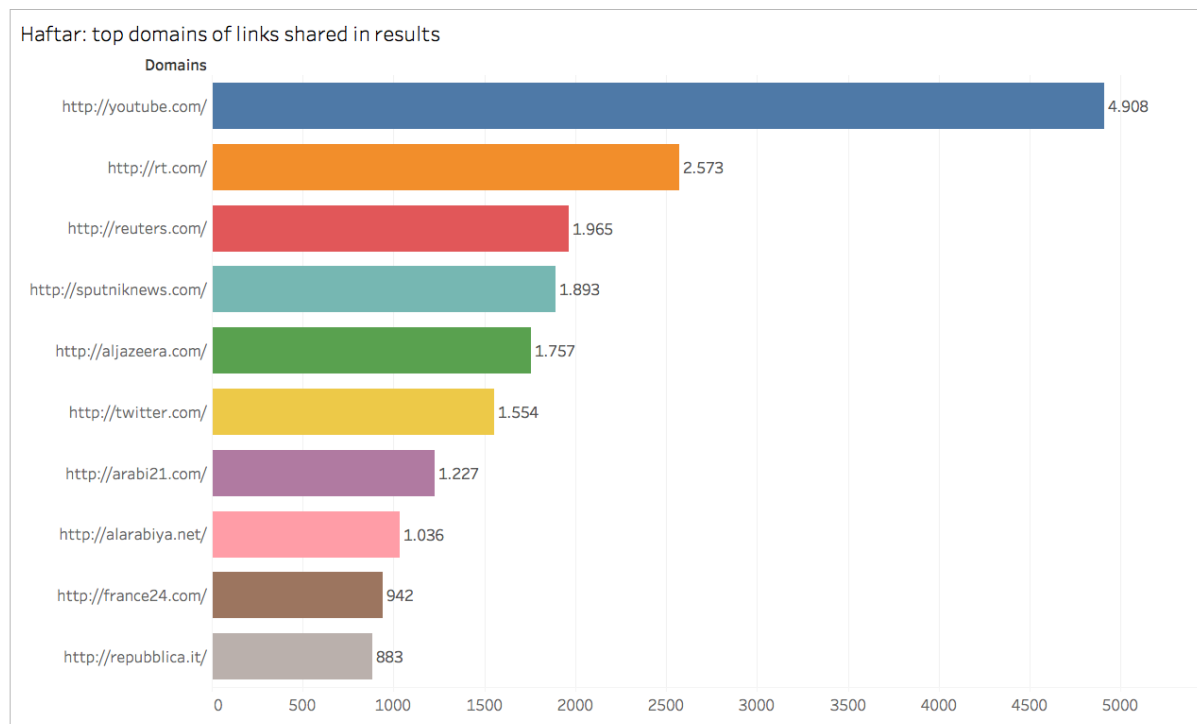


Table 9: Top 10 domains of links shared most frequently in contents detected



VI. WHO'S WHO ONLINE: THE INFLUENCERS

The ranking of the most frequent domains is connected to the ranking of the most active subjects and with the best performance in the period under consideration. These features are useful to define who the influencers are, that is the profiles or the most relevant sites for the discussions of the information universe related to Haftar. More than 150,000 unique users and over 11,000 sites were detected. Among these, the most active site and actor turned out to be the information blog in Arabic bald-news.com, with over 3,000 posts published in just 2 weeks. The most influential author was the official Facebook page of Libya Al Ah-rar TV (over 246k interactions on Fb), while the most influential site is arabic.rt.com: more than 263,000 interactions obtained in the Arabic version of RT.

VII. INFOWARFARE: INFLUENCE AND SATURATE

Saturating the information horizon

The ranking of the most active sites highlights the performance of some information blogs. The surprising activity of bald-news.com (over 3000 articles published) is not isolated. Other blogs stand out for a marked activity: arabyoum.com (2.7k articles), sabq-sa (2.4k), alsharqtimes.com (1.9k), medanelakhbar.com (1.7k), uk.arabicnews.com (1.5k). Through an analysis of site domains it is possible to demonstrate a link between all these sites, further expanding the network of interconnected blogs (table 10).

Haftar: a blog network spreading news

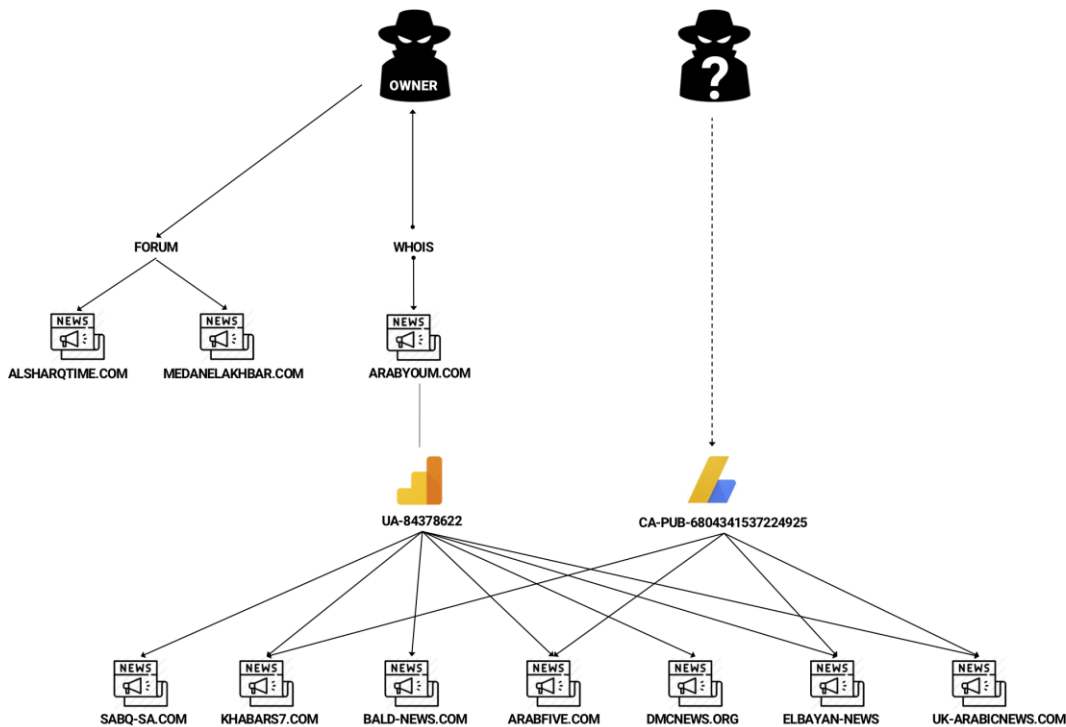


Table 10: the network of information blogs



These blogs share thousands of articles a day copying from various international sources and publishing articles translated into Arabic, probably through a script called Mubashier.

This system is not the only technological element they have in common. Analyzing the structure of the pages source code, other common elements also emerge: the Google Analytics identification code (UA-84378622, code held by the site administrator), and the AdSense account through which the advertising present on some sites is monetized (PUB-6804341537224925). It is no coincidence: through the whois service it is possible to retrieve the personal data of the owner of one of the sites mentioned (alsharqtime). This connects the alsharqtime administrator directly to all the other blogs identified because the same management code is used for this site.

Through the email used by the administrator during the registration of the site it is possible to trace the username of a participant to a technological topic forum based in Saudi Arabia. Here the user declares himself the owner of the alsharqtime and medanelakbar sites. Over the past two years he has been interacting with other forum users: asking them to buy news sites or services (eg articles SEO compliant), or by posting sales offers for sites he owns. In particular, it is possible to read two different threads of August 2018 in which he offers both arabyoum.com and dmcnews.org. The owner emphasizes potential earnings several times, especially in relation to a peculiar characteristic: both sites are indexed by Google News. The owner of the two sites highlights the chance of automatically populating blog content through the Mubashier script and the possibility of increasing the spread of articles through instant sharing via Twitter or Facebook accounts. The automatic publication of content through copy / paste from other sources, of course, is frowned by Google and can result in penalties in the positioning of the site. For this reason, the owner repeatedly reiterates the indexing of his blogs in the news section of Google: this characterizes their value, since being able to evade the search engine quality controls promises a high volume of visits and, consequently, a higher remuneration potential through advertising revenues.

These sites are still indexed by Google News in Arabic for the following geographical areas: the United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt. This means the possibility for ordinary users to find, within the Google News review, articles published by these blogs. The traffic estimates provided by Alexa - Amazon show, for the sites that are part of this network, a significant increase in monthly traffic during the last months, especially from: Egypt, UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Kuwait, and Yemen. In short, these apparently different and independent sites act in unison by automatically publishing an enormous quantity of articles. In relation to the analyzed data only, the blogs listed here have published a total of over 15 thousand articles in two weeks, more than a thousand a day.

Currently it is not possible to know whether the sites are still owned by the very same person identified here, or he is only a manager for third parties. Just as the identity of the Google AdSense registration account (advertising monetization) is not known.

Who's talking?

Analyzing the hashtags associated with the detected contents emerge, among others, the ones related to #Libya, to #Tripoli, and to the acronym that identifies the Haftar #LNA team. Abnormal dynamics do occur when analyzing tweets characterized by the simultaneous presence of these 3 hashtags. Running a search dedicated to detecting tweets published in the reference period containing "#LNA #Libya #Tripoli" or "#LNA #Tripoli #Libya" we obtain 382 tweets published by 169 authors.

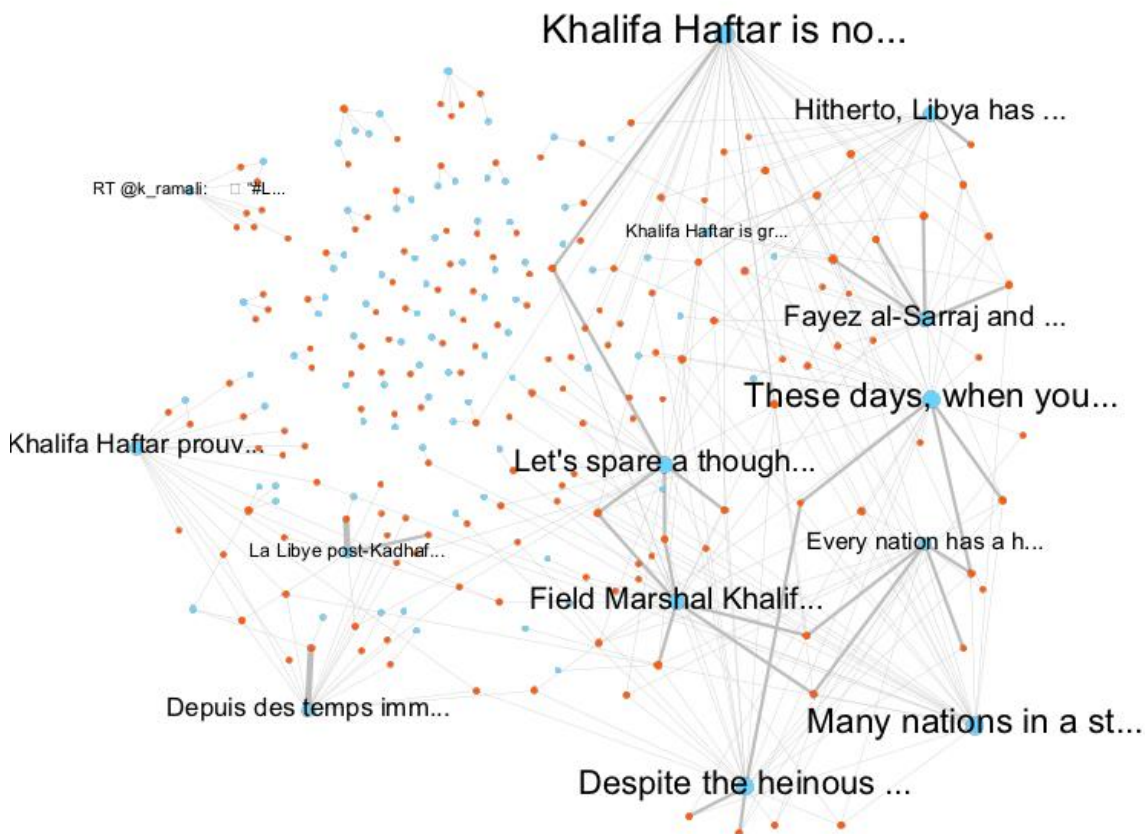


Table 11: Social Network Analysis of posted tweets

A Social Network Analysis applied to the contents retrieved allows to highlight a hidden structure within the dataset (represented in table 11). In blue are represented the tweets detected, in orange the users. The size of the node is relative to the



number of connections: for example, the more a text has been tweeted, the larger the node will be.

Some messages are posted, with the very same text, by several authors. The greatest concentration is present in the right part of the graph, in which several users in orange are connected to several nodes in blue. The orange-blue isolated points, on the other hand, describe specific situations. Isolated users, present in the graph as single nodes with a single tweet, have published unique tweets in the dataset. Curiously, these texts are very similar to those just mentioned above, but with variations or substitutions of just one or a few words.

Below, the 10 most frequently shared texts:

1. “Khalifa Haftar is now more influential in Libya than the so-called 'Peace brokers'. Posterity will add credence to this statement. #LNA #Tripoli #Libya” (24 times)
2. ““These days, when you think of of peace, development, accordance, one name readily comes to mind - Khalifa Haftar. He has been of humongous impact in ensuring that Libya soars again. #LNA #Libya #Tripoli”” (21 times)
3. “Many nations in a state of anarchy should take a cue from Libya's Khalifa Haftar. Sometimes all it takes to produce tranquility is one hero, one man who's ready to face it head-on. #LNA #Libya #Tripoli” (19 times)
4. “Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar is gradually becoming Libya’s most potent warlord. He has been active in the country’s political scene for over forty years and he seems to be the only obstacle between Libya and a total capitulation. #LNA #Libya #Tripoli” (18 times)
5. “Fayez al-Sarraj and Qatari-supported terrorist groups are taking concerted efforts to discredit Khalifa Haftar. Its understandable, bad always tries to smear the good. #LNA #Libya #Tripoli” (15 times)
6. “Hitherto, Libya has been ravaged by terrorist threats but the massive brilliance of Khalifa Belqasim Haftar seems to be keeping the insurgency at bay. #LNA #Tripoli #Libya” (15 times)
7. “Khalifa Haftar prouve qu'un seul homme suffit pour changer le monde. Juste un homme. #LNA #Libya #Tripoli” (14 times)
8. “Let's spare a thought for Khalifa Haftar. He has been doing the 'Lord's work' in Libya. Its sad to know that some terrorist groups are working tooth and nail to disparage his efforts. #LNA #Tripoli #Libya” (13 times)

9. “Despite the heinous impacts of Al Sarraj and several terrorist groups, Libya haven't budged thanks to the likes of Khalifa Haftar. Arise Libya! #LNA #Libya #Tripoli” (13 times)
10. “Every nation has a hero. Its safe to say that Khalifa Haftar is inking his name as Libya's latest hero. #LNA #Libya #Tripoli” (13 times)



Table 12: some examples of research results on Twitter

This is not a simple coordinated action by willing activists. Instead, the profiles seem to be used to impersonate independent, ordinary citizens.

Through a qualitative analysis of the profiles it is possible to make some observations. Most of the identified profiles seem to have been created to impersonate British citizens (some pseudo-French are also present). They present anonymous profile photos or with British tourist attractions, showing interest in institutional accounts and English news (football, internal politics, institutions...).

However, from an Information Warfare perspective, the profiles involved in this operation are not a particularly refined instrument: neither for the technological characteristics nor for the methods of psychological operation.

The timelines of these profiles are also populated through citations of famous phrases: a very basic method to automate Twitter profiles and show them active in the eyes of unsuspecting users. In some cases, even tweets are incomplete (eg Maggie, whose [tweet](#) is only: "Khalil Gibran"). Through the analysis of tweets, the use of the "TweetCaster for Android" application emerges, used precisely to publish famous or motivational sentences from multiple profiles (eg at 23:31 on 21 February 2019, [Maggie](#) and [Adam](#) publish the same tweet "We learn from everyone's actions. Some teach us what to do , others what not to". Also, note the poor use of punctuation and spaces.

Comparing the timelines of these accounts, it emerges a common element: among the first tweets posted, with a certain consistency, they shared contents related to



the United Arab Emirates. One of the posted tweets is: "Why I love UAE: Place where we learn what humanity is". In other cases, they conveyed precise positions towards Qatar in relation with the Kashoggi case ([Adam](#): "#Qatar has a proper channel in place to fuel propaganda; something to think of; mediafinancing"; [Christine](#) " The Emir of #Qatar has been influencing international and local media by #mediafinancing his way through it all.disappointing. #Kashoggi " ; [Fred](#) "Qatar has been financing it way through the media one propaganda after another, wow! This people must think the rest of the world is stupid. #Mediafinancing # Kashoggi").



VIII. CONCLUSIONS

The geopolitical situation and the digital information ecosystem draw a complex system of numerous heterogeneous elements around the recent Libyan conflict. The category of hybrid confrontation is the analysis framework that best allows to face this complexity and to restore intelligibility to the dynamics in place.

The assessment on the entire online information landscape shows a close link between the information horizon of strategic communication and the kinetic horizon of actions on the ground. The online discussions around Haftar start on April 4, in relation to the official launch of the operation Flood of Dignity (*taufan al-karama*) and in correspondence with other topical events on the ground, also with the use of hashtags related to specific cases, as # ح ف ت ر ي حرر مطار طراب لس (#Haftar_frees_Tripoli_airport) beginning on April 6th in parallel with the clashes for the infrastructure (of great importance both under the military and the political profile).

The first 5 most common languages (Arabic, English, Italian, French, Turkish) closely reflect the countries most involved in Libya. At the same time, an important portion of the total volume of contents detected is originated in countries that traditionally support Haftar. In fact, the geolocation of contents helps to further illuminate the horizon: 34% comes from Saudi Arabia, about 7% from Libya, 5.2% from Qatar, 4.6% from Egypt, 4.4 % by the UAE. The presence of Italy is interesting: the fifth nation in terms of the number of contents produced (around 5% of the total).

The most influential accounts or sites in the online debate, as well as the most viral contents, are all related to websites or information portals: narration and framing of events are the key functions of the communicative action staged by the information panorama analyzed.

The content with more interactions appeared on the official Ennahar TV FB page. It is a photosequence of a column of Haftar's LNA troops on its way to Tripoli, extracted from a video of great efficacy and good technical level: above recent standards in Libyan propaganda. Also for this reason, these images have become among those most frequently used, even by European media outlets, to illustrate the ongoing conflict. The sense of order and discipline conveyed may have contributed to strengthening the image of the LNA as a regular army, a framing consistent with Haftar's objectives. As for another widely circulated content coming from the Ara-



bic version of RT, it presents a line of argument perfectly consistent with the main pro-Haftar narratives. Specifically, the complex and varied Misrata's political reality is treated with an oversimplification and identified with the agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood and Turkey (rivals of Haftar). Furthermore, the Turkey-Haftar opposition is played on the level of support/fight against terrorism in Libya, thus strengthening one of the main narratives in favor of the General.

In the period of time under consideration, the information scene in Italian does not appear to be significantly affected by distortions related to the Information Warfare. The content with more interactions in Italian is an article appeared in L'Espresso magazine which focuses on the issues of migratory flows and the camps in which migrants are held in Libya. In fact, this is an issue that is enhanced by the internal debate on Italian domestic politics, rather than by factors or motivations strictly connected with Rome's foreign agenda.

The official Facebook page of Libya Al Ahrar TV and the site arabic.rt.com are among the most effective in obtaining the reaction of their readers. Finally, bald-news blog emerges as the most active in the publication of content (Haftar is cited in over 2,500 articles published in the analyzed period). The remarkable performance of this site introduces a second aspect of the analysis.

The hybrid warfare affecting Libya relies on the use of Information Warfare activities. This analysis identifies two examples with different modalities of action, channels used, and objectives.

The first kind of activity takes place on social media. Groups of Twitter accounts have been detected that are involved in a covert operation, spreading apparently spontaneous messages. The study of the tweets published shows the construction of a pro-Haftar narrative (man of order in Libya, struggling with Daesh, al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups in Libya).

The second kind of activity detected is more complex and with less predictable outcomes. A network of blogs and information portals, only apparently independent, publishes a huge amount of articles related to General Haftar (over 15,000 entries, more than 1,000 a day in the analyzed period). The publication of a large volume of news in a simultaneous and coordinated way can achieve the effect of saturating the information horizon for a certain audience or geographical area, by constructing a credible representation of the evolution of the situation on the ground or international reactions to events.

If the group of sites referred to a single manager, as the data would seem to suggest, it would be an activity more complex than the former kind of hybrid activity mentioned above. Unlike the use of dozens or hundreds of social accounts aimed at spreading a certain framing of an event, a tool aimed at flooding the press re-



view on the web with oriented (or manipulated) content could be used for more strategic purposes, with the creation of a coherent narrative poised to grow and develop.

These two examples show the capacity of the operations of InfoWarfare to adapt to the context and to the operational horizon, as well as to respond with dynamism to the changes inherent in irregular operations on the ground. From the study of the geopolitical situation and the dynamics that emerged in the information ecosystem, it seems reasonable to expect in the immediate future an increase in hybrid actions corresponding to either a possible weakening of Haftar's position on the ground, or a stall in the fighting (that would equally risk damaging the image of the General, inevitably linked to the ability to report successes on the ground). The narrative of the fight against terrorism seems at the moment to be the most effective tool to get diplomatic leverage, as well as a highly effective tactic from the point of view of digital communication. At the same time, we can expect an increase in InfoWarfare operations. A growth implemented in parallel, both in quantity and complexity.

In such an environment, there are looming potential risks also for the perception of Italy and the Italian military presence in Libya. In fact, given the multiple interests of Italy in Libya, the commitment of Italian diplomacy to support the Government of National Accord in Tripoli, and the presence of Italian soldiers on the ground (mission MIASIT), it cannot be excluded that in the near future such hybrid actions will also hit the digital information horizon related to Italy, in Italian language too.