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FGV DAPP
DEPARTMENT
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ANALYSIS

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THE STATE OF DISINFORMATION

Foreign networks on Twitter influenced
the Brazilian electoral debate



Digital
Democracy
Room

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Foreign networks on Twitter influenced the Brazilian electoral debate according to studies by FGV DAPP

- A group of 232 profiles has acted in other countries before and has been spreading messages involving Bolsonaro, Lula and fake news about pedophilia;
- Among the most influent profiles are Russian media outlets such as RT and Sputnik, the accounts of political leaders from the US and Italy and an American alt-right youtuber;
- A second network of automated profiles coming from Venezuela, Argentina, Cuba and Ecuador published content supporting the PT candidacy;
- These two networks we identified indicate external attempts to influence the electoral debate in Brazil by actors of the right and left wings in other countries.

1. Russian and alt-right influence

- A group of 232 profiles, identified by FGV DAPP from misinformative content about pedophilia, made a total of **8,185 publications** in Portuguese in the period between **08/01/2018** until **09/26/2018**, related to Brazilian politics;

- The influencer with the most interactions in publications on the network of 232 profiles is the profile **@RT_com**, a Russian state television channel. Spanish language profiles owned by **RT**, **@ActualidadRT** and **@SputnikInt**, a Russian news channel, also appeared with a high number of mentions;

- Out of the 232 profiles, **99 released their location data**, which could be used to view the distribution of their tweets in the world according to the following image:

Among the last 400 publications by these 232 profiles, we identified tweets in more than **40 distinct languages**. The ones used the most were English, Spanish and Italian. Portuguese appeared in the sixth position; the tweets in Russian represented almost 3% of the base and were made by 54 profiles;

- The messages in these last 400 publications included the presence of the Italian vice prime minister, political leaders of the United States and youtuber **Paul Joseph Watson** - who is associated with the alt-right -, as well as Russian portals **RT**, **RT en Español** and **Sputnik**;

- Some of these profiles have acted in other electoral debates, such as the in the **USA elections** (in which we found 87 accounts), in **France** (55 accounts) and in **Germany** (98 accounts). In the debate about the exit of the **United Kingdom** from the European Union (Brexit), there were 66 accounts. We also found their participation in debates in **Argentina, Paraguay** and **Mexico**.

Fake News about pedophilia



106 profiles

identified spreading fake news



2468 profiles

interacted with @garoukike



@marcelothor69



@garoukike

retweets

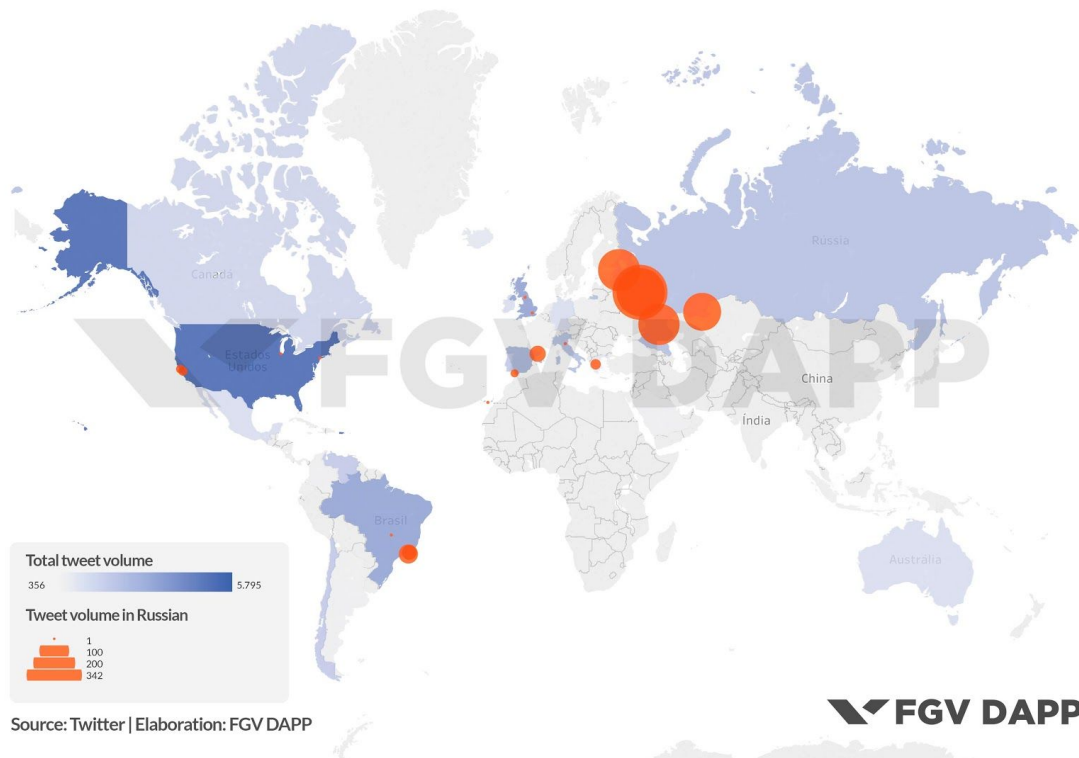
232 profiles

International networks interacting about Brazilian elections

also published content in many international elections

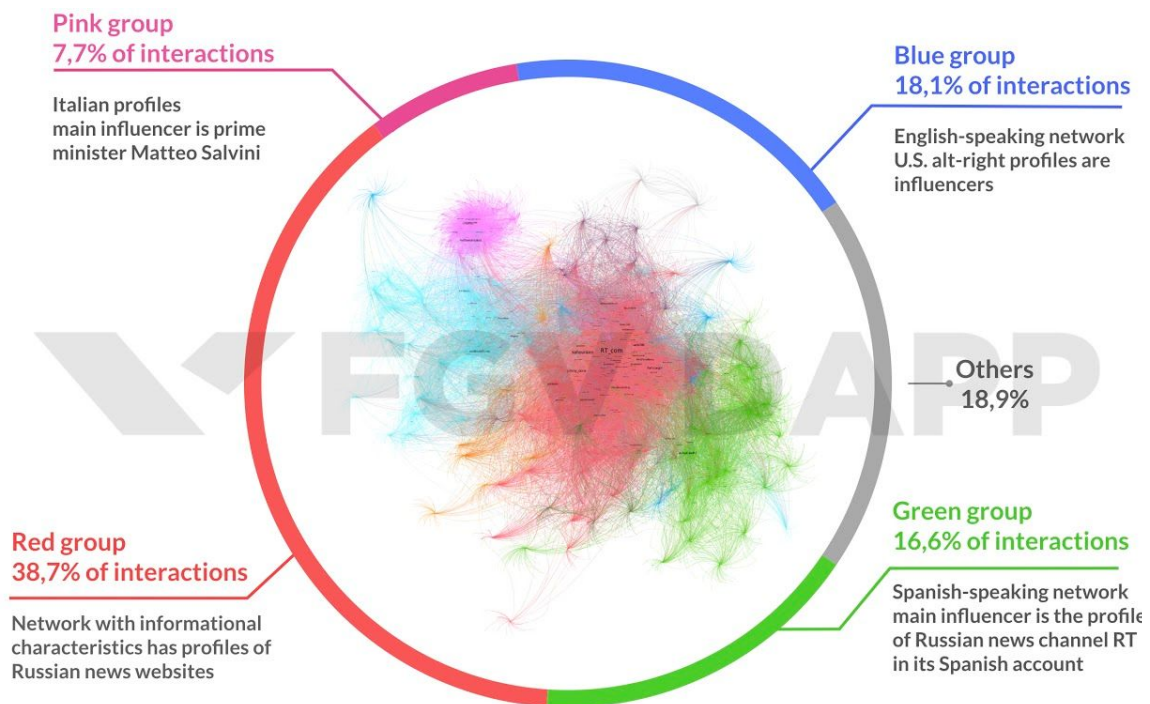
Germany	USA	Brexit	France
98	87	66	55
Mexico	U.K	Paraguay	Argentina
47	45	37	11

Source: Twitter | Elaboration: FGV DAPP



Source: Twitter Elaborated by FGV DAPP. Note: yellow dots represent tweets in Russian.

Analysis of retweets of the 400 most recent publications made by users presents in the misinformation chain



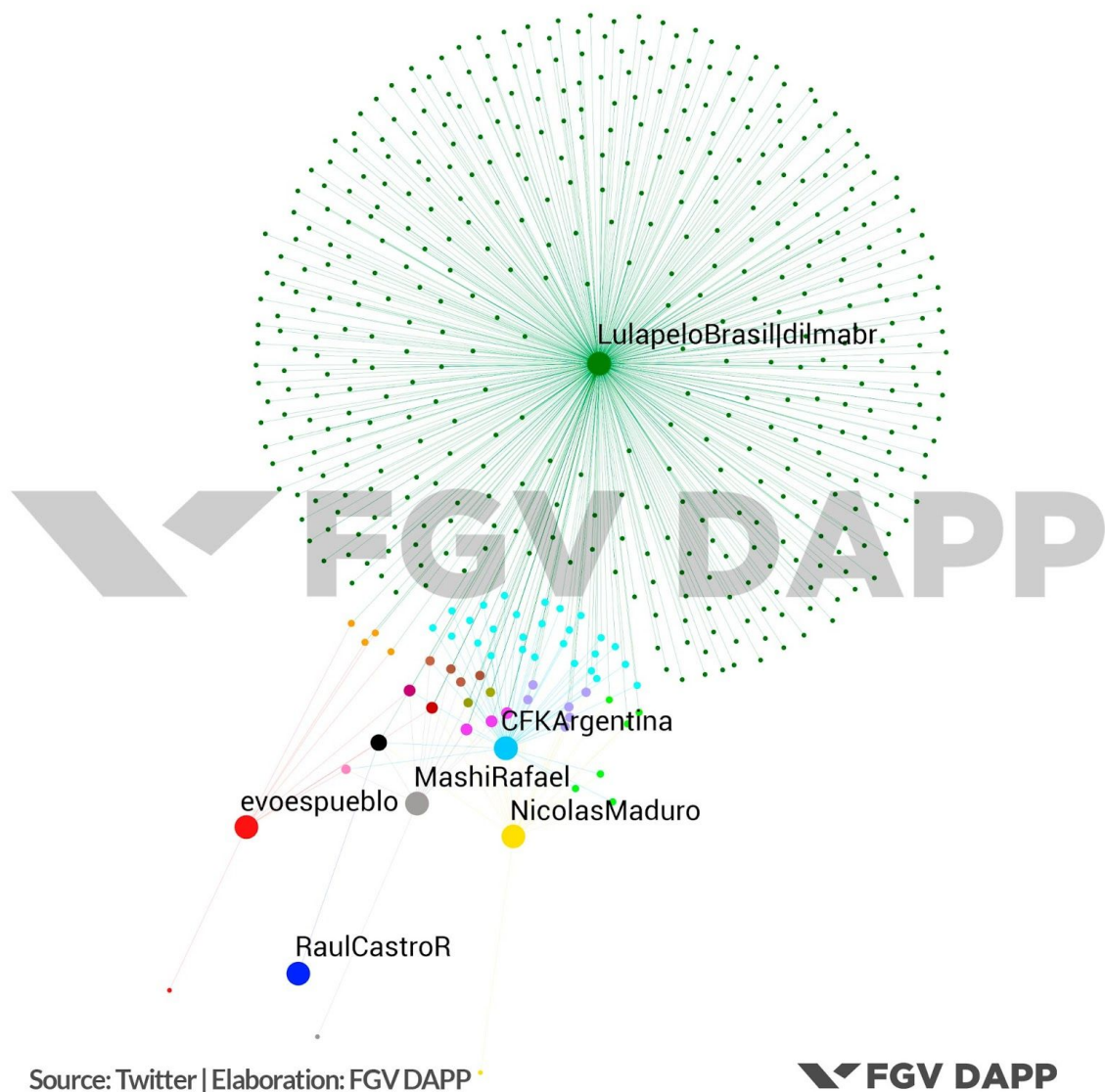
Source: Twitter | Elaboration: FGV DAPP

2. Influence coming from Latin America

- In the period between **August 14 and 24, 2018**, FGV DAPP identified **117 automated profiles** coming from **Venezuela**, which made 332 publications. We also found **11 profiles** coming from **Argentina** with 18 publications, **6 Cuban accounts** with 39 publications, and **4 profiles** coming from **Ecuador** with 11 publications, publishing content in favor of the PT candidacy, adding up to 138 profiles;

The bots we identified complemented our previous data collection, with a **database from October to December, 2017**, in which we also identified mentions made by **accounts from Argentina, Venezuela and Ecuador** in interactions with the official profiles of Brazilian political actors and actors associated with parties and political figures, aligned with the left wing in these countries;

Relationships between the bots and the political actors



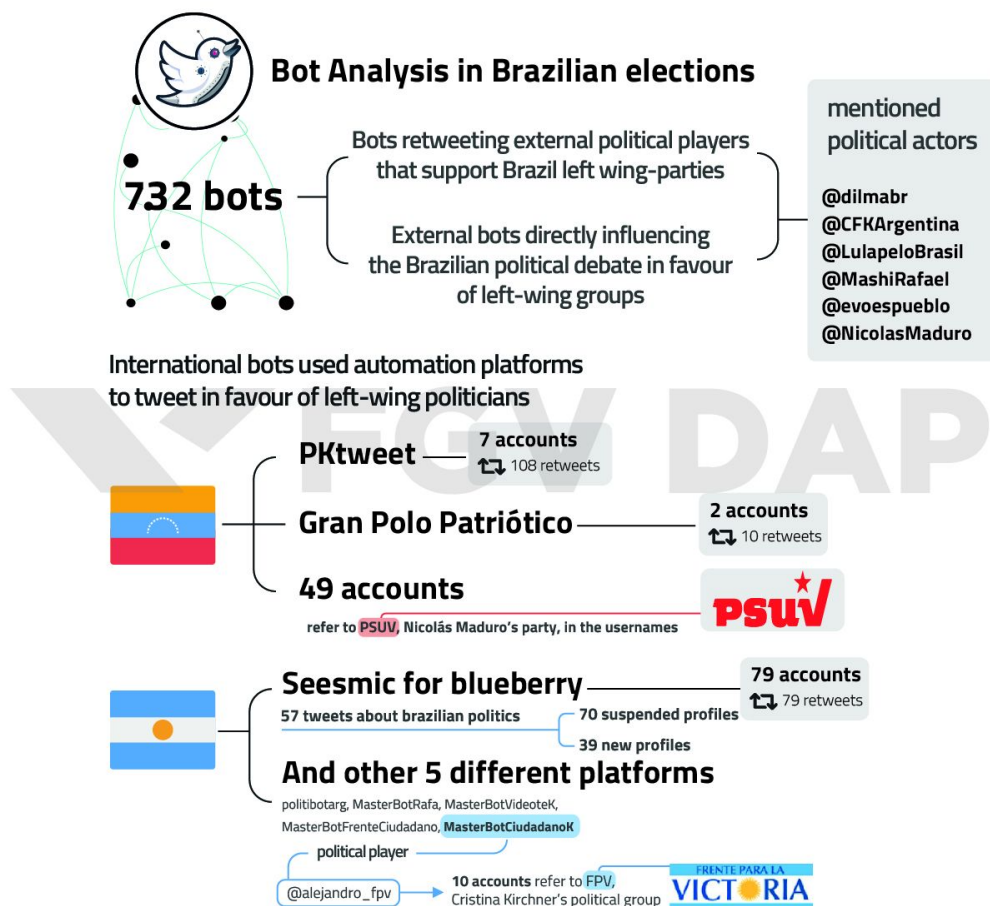
Source: Elaborated by FGV DAPP. Data Twitter

- Out of the **732 automated profiles** in the 2017 database, **102 accounts** were tagged as **having mentioned South American political actors**.

- The **graph above** shows the relationship between the bots and the political actors. Each knot in the graph represents a profile (except for 'LulapeloBrasil|dilmabr', which is the combination of Lula's and Dilma's profiles); named knots represent actors and unnamed knots represent bots. Each edge connects a bot to a political actor and means that the bot mentioned that actor one or more times. The bigger the knot is for each automated profiles, the more political actors it mentioned in its publications.

- The list of **relationships between each group of bots and political actors can be found below**. To help visualize the degree of proximity to political actors, we highlighted only the groups of automated profiles that mentioned more than one politician.

Relationship between each group of bots and the political actors



Source: Twitter | Elaboration: FGV DAPP