Iran 'peddling disinformation' to influence Scottish election

From [The Scotsman](#)

[Reported by The Times](#), cyber specialists working on behalf of the Iranian regime are targeting Scottish voters by posing as pro-independence users on Twitter and Facebook. They pose as locals sympathetic to Scottish independence, and encourage real users to share pro-separatist material, graphics, memes and cartoons with their contacts online. Fake websites with domain names chosen to influence campaigns have also been set up to trick internet users.

The study by the [The society has said that the Iranian regime's](#) efforts are similar to that of Russia — designed to instil chaos, uncertainty and division to weaken their adversaries. The report said that the increasing presence of Iranian disinformation was an attempt by the regime to "attack the constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom".

Facebook and Twitter are taking an increasingly proactive role in identifying and banning "co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour" by various regimes. Most of the Iran-related activity is targeted at Iraq, Israel and Afghanistan. However, the report said Iranian activity had been increasingly detected in Scotland over the past year.

In March Facebook removed hundreds of fake accounts and pages connected to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting corporation, the state-controlled media group. Fake accounts shared and promoted the pages, groups and memes to try to generate content to go viral. In one example an image was reproduced of a post from a fake Iranian online persona mocking the Scottish Conservatives. It was one of 446 accounts

closed by Facebook for violating its policies against foreign interference.

The findings were part of a wider investigation into Iran's increasing attempts to interfere in foreign elections. *Iran has form for trying to meddle in Scottish affairs. In 2014 Iran attempted to interfere with Scotland's referendum on independence, according to*