

# Analysis of the Indian Chronicles

Zeeshan Javed

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The recently published *Indian Chronicles* report by the EU Disinfo Labs, has presented a detailed expose of the massive systematic disinformation campaign conducted by India against Pakistan. The expose has highlighted the systematic and choreographed drama through various actors and institutes to present a damaging narrative against Pakistan within India and internationally. With a massive disinformation network of over 600 fake media outlets, hijacking accredited UN organizations, resuscitating dead individuals and coordinating with anti-Pakistan elements in NGOs, the Indian Chronicles is a brazen attempt by India to malign and isolate Pakistan, while at the same time, give credence to India's narrative.

This policy brief is an attempt to piece together various contours of India's disinformation campaign and provide a better understanding for our policymakers to understand the plethora of disinformation tools that India has utilized against Pakistan for the past decade and a half, or even more.

### **Analysis:**

In order to better understand the outreach and impact of India's disinformation campaign, it is important to identify various actors, their modus operandi and institutions employed in the exercise with the sole purpose of maligning Pakistan and, to an extent, China.

#### **1) Actors:**

The roots of the organized disinformation campaign can be traced to Ankit Srivastava, who acted as a lynchpin or front-man of this disinformation campaign. He is the Vice Chairman of the Srivastava Group. The group has been responsible for registering domains, creating fake organizations and media outlets.

#### **2) Modus Operandi:**

The Indian Chronicles has undertaken a detailed campaign of resurrecting defunct or inactive organizations. These organizations, have then taken on the role of promoting the Indian government's line at international forums, including at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Interestingly, most of these "resurrected" organizations have forsaken their initial role and acted as a political tool for the Indian propaganda machinery. These organizations would focus on Gilgit Baltistan, Balochistan, Women and Minority rights in Pakistan and so on. For example, the *International Seed Crushers Organization* that spoke at the UNHRC, instead of discussing its area of specialization, made it a point to condemn Pakistan's treatment of minorities.

#### **3) Fake Media Outlets:**

Not surprisingly, Indian media has always held an anti-Pakistan bias. However, during the past two decades, a deliberate, systematic and planned campaign by the Srivastava group was launched. The Indian Chronicles has exposed a vast network of over 500 media outlets that have engaged in a deliberate maligning campaign against Pakistan. The fake content that was created by the Indian Chronicles was circulated by hundreds of fake websites, with more or less identical content. Two of the prominent fake news networks that were employed by the Indian Chronicles were the Big News Network and World News Network. Between them these fake news networks have been operating approximately 500 fake media outlets. These news outlets would claim to represent a region or a territory outside of South Asia, but would regularly replicate EU Chronicle's anti-Pakistan content. These outlets syndicated content

from the EU Chronicles under fake journalist aliases. Some of the names of these fake news outlets are provided at Annexure - A

**4) “Zombie” Organizations:**

An interesting revelation by the Indian Chronicles expose was the resuscitation of dormant organizations. The Indian Chronicles managed to hijack and takeover organizations which were dormant for a long period of time. For instance, the *Canners International Permanent Committee (CIPC)*, which was founded in 1938 to assist and advance the canning industry. CIPC ceased to exist in 2007. The domain name of the organization ([cipengo.com](http://cipengo.com)) was registered on January 20, 2016 and this is how the organization was resurrected by the Indian Chronicles. Similarly, even though the organization was formed to protect the canning industry, the aim was then shifted to undermine Pakistan at the UNHRC. CIPC is one such example of the resurrection of inactive organizations. The report lists a total of ten accredited organizations that could be directly attributed to the Srivastava Group (Annex - B)

The Indian Chronicles also conducted an effort to resurrect dead individuals. The Indian Chronicles used the name ‘Louis Shon’ to register the domain for Commission to Study the Organization of Peace (CSOP). Louis Shon is a play on the name, Louis B. Sohn who is an actuality a former Chairman of the CSOP and died in 2006. He has also been listed as an active participant at various CSOP events in 2007 and 2011, when in fact he was dead at the time.

**5) Coordination with other NGOs at the UNHRC:**

The Srivastava Group was also able to influence and connect with other NGOs to speak at the UNHRC against Pakistan. These organizations were supported by other Srivastava NGOs (details of which are attached as Annexure-B), to speak at the UNHRC. Usually, these organizations would deviate from their original agenda and criticize Pakistan. For instance, the *African Regional Agricultural Credit Association (AFRACA)* has been very vocal against Pakistan in the UNHRC and has even invited Pakistani minorities to speak on behalf of it. Such organizations have provided many entities and persons a platform to speak at the UNHRC, which includes Baloch People’s Congress, World Baloch Women’s Forum, Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, Baloch Students Organization, United Kashmir People’s National Party, etc. Mehran Marri has also spoken multiple times at the behest of these organizations. The Srivastava Group has also been responsible for creating various NGOs outside of the UN that regularly contribute to projecting an anti-Pakistan narrative while bolstering India. These NGOs are tasked to exploit the issue of Pakistani Minorities, Women, and Human Rights etc. These NGOs, held side events that contributed to the Indian lobby, for instance, the display of “Free Baluchistan” posters by the Baluchistan House. Details of these NGOs are attached as Annexure-C.

**6) More than 600 Domain names registered:**

Another aspect of this massive disinformation campaign has been the registration of over 600 domain names. These domains were purchased for the creation of think-tanks, NGOs, Parliamentary Groups in the European Parliament, online media, domains linked to geographical interests or territorial disputes (Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Khalistan, etc.), consulting companies, publishing houses and other professional websites. These domains were purchased directly or indirectly by the Srivastava Group. The purpose of purchasing more than 600 domains is to a) prevent Pakistan from acquiring domains of their interest (such as [balochnews.com](http://balochnews.com), [balochistantoday.org](http://balochistantoday.org)), which is also known as “cybersquatting”. b) by creating a vast network of fake content and media, India enacted an artificial ecosystem in which the content produced by EU Chronicles could gain legitimacy with each cycle.

**7) Content Syndication:**

One of the key aspects of the massive disinformation campaign of the EU Chronicles was the fact that it relied on Content Syndication. The EU Chronicles would reproduce title and description from the European Parliament website and claim it as one of their own works, carried out by their own reporters, while, in fact, the journalists who had supposedly written these articles would not exist. The report suggests that such malicious content is syndicated from various European organizations through automation, and no human or reporter had written such contents. The report further suggests that this was done by the EU Chronicles to appear as a legitimate European news outlet producing original and authentic content. However, several Members of the European Parliament (MEP) have been attributed to writing for the EU Chronicles. Nine out of twelve MEPs who had written for the EU Chronicles were also involved in a previous investigation linked to EP Today, which conducted a similar operation. These MEPs participated in Pro-Indian lobbying campaigns and even some controversial unofficial visits to the Maldives.

**8) Content Amplification:**

The content produced by the EU Chronicles served as a base for further content dissemination and amplification. The Asian News International (ANI), which is the biggest print and electronic news agency in India has been a partner to the Srivastava Group, which would publish news articles from EU Chronicles and disseminate it further to its clients in Europe and Aisa. This cycle further legitimized and authenticated the content from EU Chronicles and was disseminated rapidly to other news channels and newspapers within India. This content would further get picked up by news aggregators such as Yahoo News India, attracting an even larger audience. The ANI would also pick up news from fake news outlets such as Times of Geneva and 4 News Agency as well.

The purpose of repackaging the news by ANI was also to disseminate it to a wider audience, at least, domestically in India. Conversely, the ANI was also responsible for polluting search engines with results from fake news against Pakistan.

The ANI also misrepresented oral interventions at the UNHCR by not indicating properly who the speakers are supposed to actually represent, instead it would just mention them as a Pakistani minorities' representative. For instance, during the 37<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, Mr. Muhammad Jawad was supposed to represent the "Cameroon Youths and Students Forum for Peace". However, the ANI video report only presents him as a "Baloch Activist".

**9) Two Streams of content**

The content produced by EU Chronicles can be divided into two categories:

**a) Brussels Based Content:**

This content was designed to target the MEPs and to lure them towards a pro-Indian narrative. The content produced was centered on the Parliamentary Questions and articles, which were then endorsed by the MEPs. It further includes press conferences, events and false delegations involving MEPs.

**b) Geneva Based Content:**

The content produced in Geneva was by the NGOs at the UNHRC and it comprised of interventions by resurrected or appropriated accredited NGOs. The contents also include, side events, seminars, press conferences and demonstrations by NGOs. The aim was to develop a general support from the Civil Society towards pro-Indian narratives at the UN, and portray Pakistan in a bad light.

**10) Possible connection to RAW:**

Even though the report is unable to develop a definitive link between the Indian Chronicles and the Indian Intelligence Agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) or any other Indian

intelligence service, it does provide some indication of their involvement. The first is that the Srivastava Group owned, Agalya, which is a company specializing in hacking and spyware, has been linked to the Indian intelligence services. An article in Forbes also claims that Srivastava exclusively sold it to Indian intelligence agencies. Similarly, the report also identifies the relationship of ANI with the government. The report states that the ANI which is owned by Sanjiv Prakash and Prem Prakash, was able to maintain a close relationship with successive governments in India due to their relationship with Inna Ramamohan Rao, who served as Principal Information Officer to four Indian Prime Ministers and also four years at RAW.

#### 11) **Impact – Breakout scale:**

In terms of impact of the disinformation operation on Pakistan, the Breakout Scale, which is a metric introduced by Ben Nimmo of the Brookings Institute, has been measured as a Category 6, which is the highest in terms of impact. Category-6 in the Breakout Scale indicates that a policy response was triggered, which was the case in the form of the MEP articles. An explanation of the breakout scale's other categories are attached as Annexure – D

### **Recommendations:**

#### a) Diplomatic:

- Hold a convention with MEPs to explain the damaging impact of the Indian Chronicles.
- Belgian and Swiss Ambassadors in Pakistan to be sensitized to help facilitate a meeting with these MEPs
- Efforts should be made to speak at the EU Parliamentary Committee that meets in Brussels.
- Present Pakistan's perspective at the UNHCR by highlighting the massive misinformation campaign undertaken by the Indian Chronicles.
- Where possible, defamation suits may be filed in European Courts to expose India's machinations. Encourage MEPs that were duped to take legal action against the Indian Chronicles
- Report should be compiled into a dossier along with Pakistan's own investigations and submitted to the UN in Geneva and New York.
- The dossier should also be submitted to the Secretary General of the UN, asking the UN to conduct a thorough investigation as to how these resurrected organizations manage to regularly speak at the UNHCR meetings.

#### b) Political:

- Use these reports to expose and challenge anti-State elements mentioned in the report. Their links to the Indian Chronicles need to be projected in electronic and social media.

#### c) Media:

- The news outlets that are mentioned in this report should be blacklisted within Pakistan. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) and the Ministry of Information should inform the media in Pakistan to be aware of quoting these news agencies and develop a mechanism for news verification of anti-Pakistan content.

#### d) Intelligence:

- A "Disinfo Monitoring" setup should be setup in the intelligence apparatus of Pakistan which should identify/highlight such disinformation campaigns and take

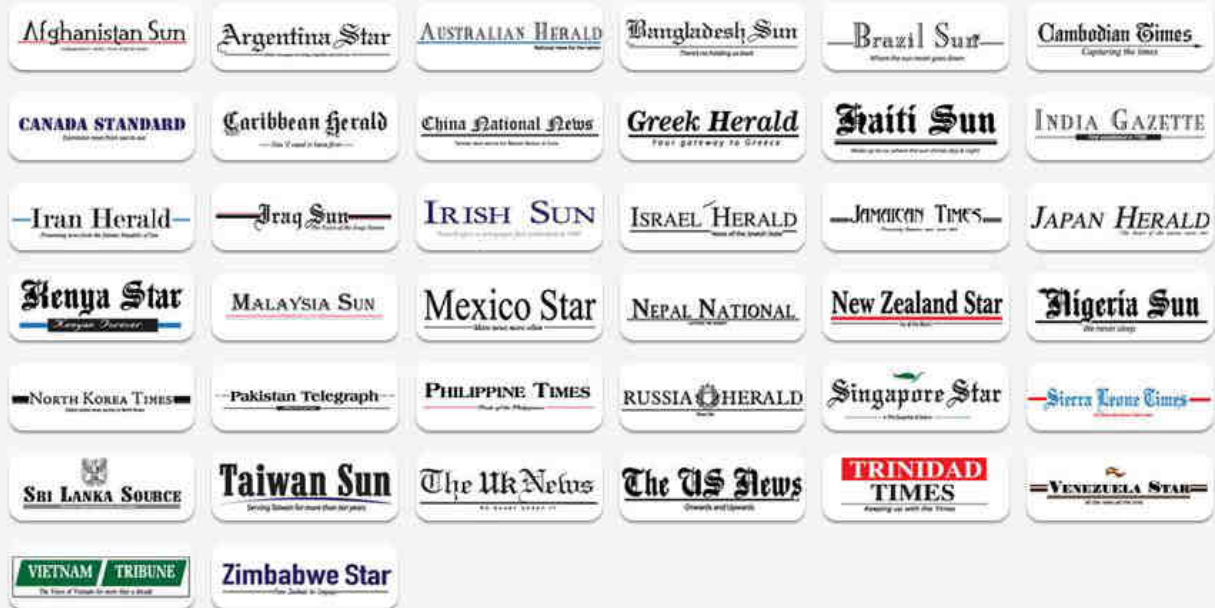
punitive actions instead of waiting for other international organizations such as the EU Disinfo Lab to publish their own reports.

**Annexure-A**

Regional:



National:



Countries:



**Annexure – B**

List of Accredited NGOs that can be directly linked to the Srivastava Group:

1. The International Institute of Non-Aligned Studies (IINS) – Transparent Ties
2. The Indian Council of Education (ICE) – Transparent Ties
3. The Commission to Study the Organization of Peace (CSOP) - Hidden Ties
4. The International Club for Peace Research (ICPR) - Hidden Ties
5. The World Environment and Resources Council (WERC) - Hidden Ties
6. United Schools International (USI) - Hidden Ties
7. International Association for Democracy in Africa (IADA) - Hidden Ties
8. Pan African Union for Science and Technology (PAUFST) - Hidden Ties
9. Canners International Permanent Committee (CIPC) - Hidden Ties
10. Center for Environment and Management Studies (CEMS) - Hidden Ties



**Annexure – C****1. Baluchistan House:**

The Baluchistan House was founded in 2013 by Tarek Fatah, a media figure in Canada, who describes himself as "an Indian born in Pakistan a Punjabi born in Islam; an immigrant in Canada with a Muslim consciousness, grounded in a Marxist youth". He is also a friend of Ankit Srivastava and has admitted that the Srivastava Group pays him to reproduce his Toronto Sun op-eds in the Srivastava-owned New Delhi Times. The Baluchistan House, which is operated by Tarek Fatah (executive director) and another activist, Mehran Marri (President), has been organizing demonstrations, conferences and other activities for a long time, in particular in Geneva.

**2. South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF):**

Created in February 2011, SADF had as a first physical address "37 Square de Meeus, Brussels", the same location as the Srivastava Group's Belgian offices and the think tank's domain name was registered by the Indian company. SADF also contributed to lobbying events. There have been traces of SADF participation to events managed by other organizations linked to the Srivastava Group such as the Baluchistan House.

**3. Women's Economic and Social Think Tank (WESTT):**

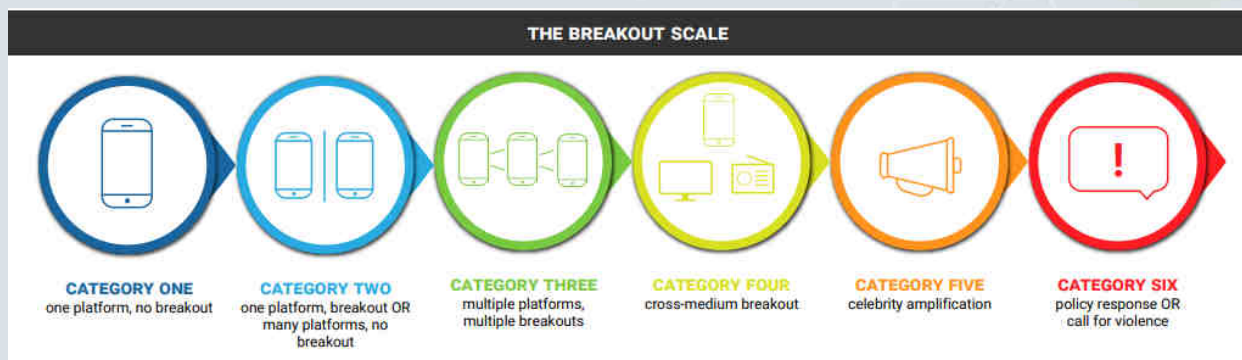
Madi Sharma is the founder of WESTT. She was part of the controversial trip to the Maldives involving MEPs that her organization organized. WESTT was also the organization that, together with Srivastava's International Institute for Non-Aligned Studies (IINS), was behind the MEPs' visit to Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in October 2019, which was largely covered by the press

**4. The International Council for Inter-Religious Cooperation (ICIRC):**

This ICIRC was set up in Belgium in 2009 by Pramila and Ankit Srivastava at Square de Meeus 37, the address of EP Today and the Srivastava Group in Brussels. ICIRC is the parent organization of the International Imam Organization, another organization created by Ankit Srivastava in 2011 and still active today, defining itself as "a platform for Muslims who are involved in the preaching of Quran"

**5. The European Organization of Pakistani Minorities (EOPM):**

This organization was created by the Srivastava group and was mainly in charge of organizing demonstrations and events about Pakistani minorities. It worked closely with another Srivastava NGO – Pakistani Women Human Rights Organization

**Annexure-D**

**Category 1:** Category One operations exist on a single platform, and their messaging does not spread beyond the community at the insertion point.

**Category 2:** Category Two operations either spread beyond the insertion point but stay on one platform, or feature insertion points on multiple platforms, but do not spread beyond them.

**Category 3:** Category Three influence operations feature insertion points and breakout moments on multiple platforms, but do not spread onto mainstream media

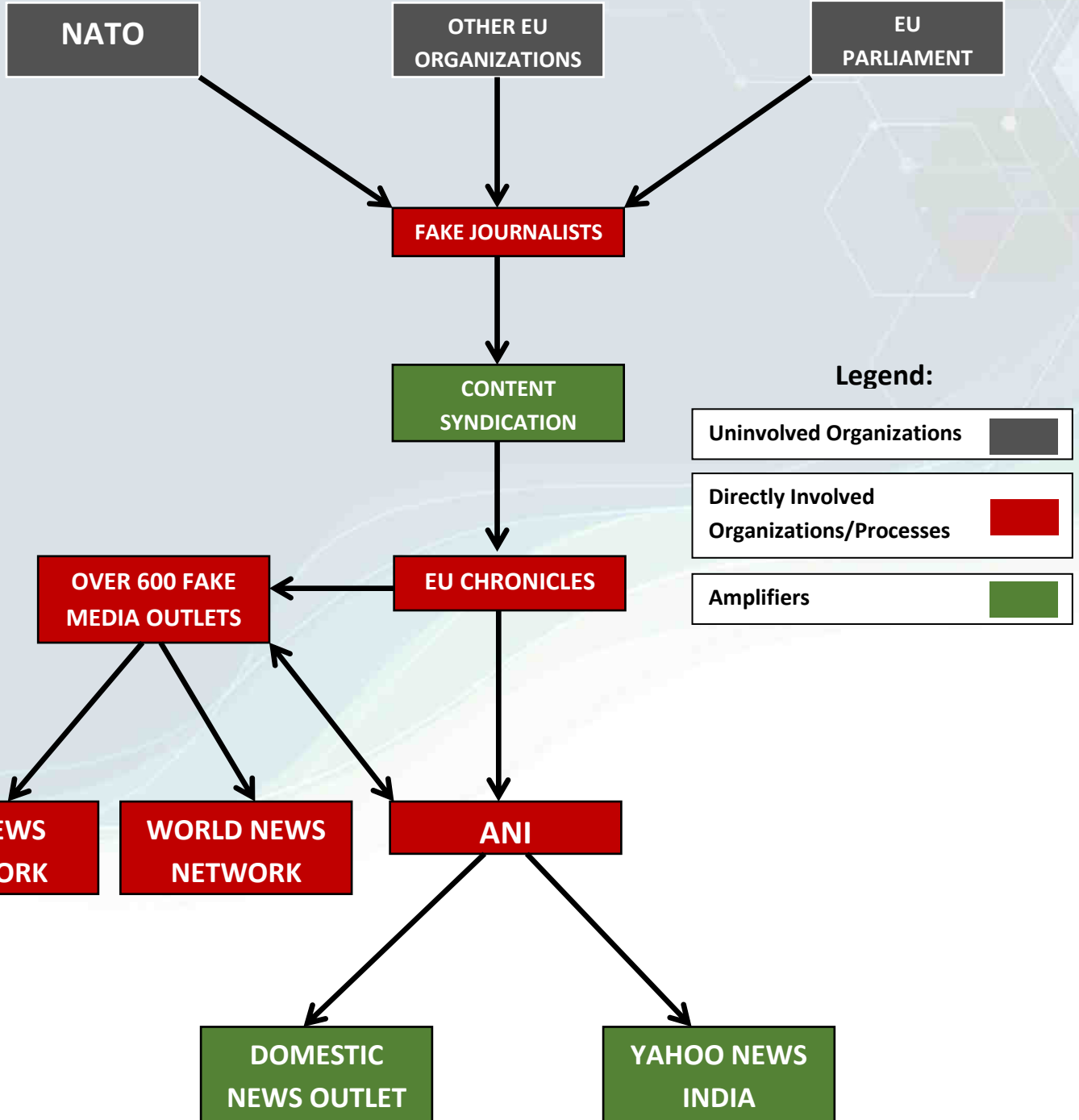
**Category 4:** Category Four operations manage to break out of the social media sphere entirely and are reported by the mainstream media, either as embedded posts or as reports.

**Category 5:** Beyond mainstream media reporting, IOs reach Category Five status if celebrities amplify their messages — especially if they explicitly endorse them. This gives the information operators a powerful external validation, effectively attaching the celebrity’s seal of approval and personal credibility to the operation’s message.

**Category 6:** An IO reaches Category Six if it triggers a policy response or some other form of concrete action, or if it includes a call for violence

**Annexure-E**

The Functioning of the media manipulation by Indian Chronicles:



**Annexure-F**

Possible Connection to Indian Intelligence:

