

Logically.

Great Game India

Disinformation Investigation





Executive Summary

- This report presents findings based on a Logically Intelligence investigation into the website Great Game India (GGI).
- GGI originally published [an article detailing a popular COVID-19 conspiracy theory](#) which has been re-published by a number of high-readership websites.
- The potential impact of GGI has been underestimated by previous research. The site has been consistently characterised as a small player or fringe outlier in the conspiracy media ecology.
- This report addresses these shortcomings by analysing Great Game India's construction of their conspiracy theory and conducting a Logically Intelligence Investigation into the history of the website's founders.
- This investigation reveals a network of article reproduction across a range of known disinformation and conspiracy websites, as well as a connection to known right-wing Russian organisations and Russian political advisors.

The Case for Investigating Great Game India

Great Game India has recently become a significant point of interest for disinformation analysts as the source of a widely circulated COVID-19 conspiracy article published by Zero Hedge.

The article, Did China Steal Coronavirus from Canada and Weaponize It? had been re-published and credited to Great Game India. The article went viral following Zero Hedge's re-publication, causing a precipitous spike in traffic to GGI, and an increase of nearly 400% in monthly web traffic from 50,000 unique impressions in December 2019 to 700,000 in February 2020.

The story, briefly paraphrased, is as follows:

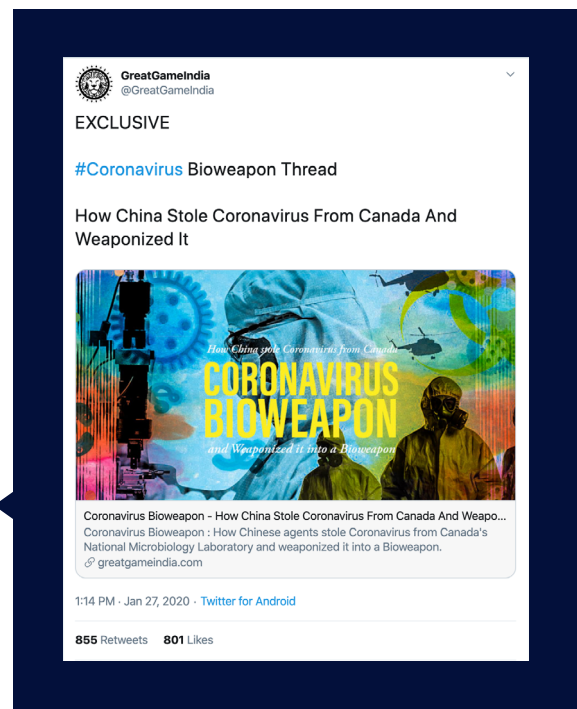
In 2012, a 60 year old Saudi man is admitted to a private hospital in Jeddah with SARS. In 2013, a sample of this man's SARS is sent to Canada's National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg. In 2019, a shipment of virus samples from the Canadian lab ends up in China – four months later, a group of Chinese virologists were forcibly ejected from the lab. The lead scientist who was escorted from the building was Chinese Bio-Warfare agent Dr. Xiangguo Qiu. Dr. Qiu made several trips to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, 20 miles from the Huanan Seafood Market – the epicentre of the outbreak.

Implied here is the notion that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) have reverse-engineered a 'stolen' SARS sample into COVID-19, and either through intention or accident, it has made its way into the global population.

Zero Hedge then followed up with their own article titled *Is This The Man Behind The Global Coronavirus Pandemic?* along with a picture and details of a scientist from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, suggesting that users "pay him a visit" to find out what was going on.

This instance of doxxing caused Zero Hedge's Facebook and Twitter profiles to be permanently suspended. Since then, the hashtag #freezerohedge has enjoyed a steady presence on Twitter and their articles are still being shared.

The Twitter page for Great Game India - [including a pinned tweet to their original version of the article](#) - along with Zero Hedge's article on their website, are still available online.



Current Reporting on Great Game India and Limitations

Gabby Deutch notes in [a piece for Wired](#) that the article Did China Steal Coronavirus from Canada and Weaponize It? was originally submitted by Great Game India. Deutch briefly mentions Great Game India's web-presence before tracing the re-posting of their article to Zero Hedge and Red State Watcher. Deutch emphasises the spread of the conspiracy to conservative news sites with a wide readership and characterises Great Game India as a "microscopic blip" on the internet.

In addition, [a report produced by NewsGuard](#) in the wake of the Zero Hedge event presented a profile of Great Game India, characterising it as a site that "severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency" - giving it a score of 12.5/100. Their report focuses heavily on debunking the information presented on the site using

more reputable journalistic sources, but does not go into any deeper analysis of how their COVID-19 conspiracy was constructed or why it was able to go viral.

This report seeks to remedy such shortcomings by conducting a thorough analysis of Great Game India's reporting into COVID-19, their website operations, and conducting OSINT investigations into who runs Great Game India and their connections to other disinformation websites.

About Great Game India

[Great Game India](#) is a blog-style news website that publishes a mixture of current affairs reports on "on geopolitics and international relations" and historical investigative pieces. Though well-presented, a cursory glance at subheadings reveal the conspiracy theories underpinning the site's reporting and worldview.

Under "Science & Society" we find "Mind Control" and under "Intelligence & Espionage" we quickly find "Demonetization – War on Cash". In addition to their main site, Great Game India also runs gginews.in, a more conventional news outlet covering a wide range of geopolitical issues related to India, with backlinks to Great Game India's main website.

Great Game India bills itself as a "journal on geopolitics and international relations" – though the print version of the journal has been "suspended temporarily" since June 2017 and [complaints have been lodged against the website for not sending copies of their journals out](#).

The journal issues are behind a paywall, but contents are viewable. GGI is clearly intending to portray itself as a serious scholarly venue, but it lacks several key features of basic transparency and accountability associated with academic research; authors are not named and there is no information on review processes or editorial policy.

GGI also heavily publicise a book "from their editors"; India in Cognitive Dissonance – self-published through Notion Press in February 2020. This text is billed as a "hard-hitting myth-buster, a timely reminder for the

decadent Indian society; a masterpiece on Geopolitics and International Relations from an Indian perspective". Though the book has an average of four out of five stars on goodreads, albeit from three reviews, [it has received a notably damning review on Amazon.in](#).

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Source: whois.arin.net
IP Address: 192.232.221.36
Name: HGBLOCK-8
Handle: NET-192-232-192-0-1
Registration Date: 16/05/13
Range: 192.232.192.0-192.232.255.255
Org: WEBSITEWELCOME.COM
Org Handle: BO
Address: 10 Corporate Drive
City: Burlington
State/Province: MA
Postal Code: 01803
Country: United States
Name Servers:
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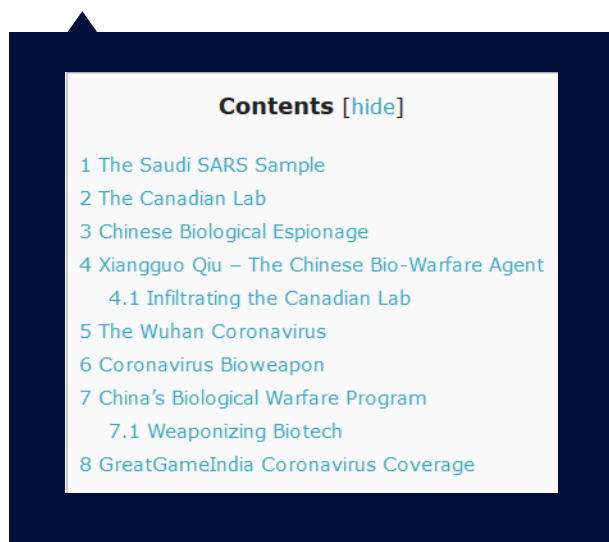
The IP addresses referring to both Great Game India and GGINews are hosted by Website Welcome in the US. Website Welcome is the company responsible for Hostgator's private name servers. Consensus from Whols.com, WebofTrust, and /r/webhosting is that "as long as they get paid, they don't care what is hosted on their servers". There are numerous reports of phishing and spam alongside legitimate businesses hosted on Website Welcome.

The “Stolen Canadian SARS Sample” conspiracy

This section will consider the way in which Great Game India assembled and presented their origin myth of COVID-19 and why this version went viral compared to other stories of a similar theme. Key here is the construction of the story that went on to be republished by Zero Hedge.

Great Game India had distributed their COVID-19 origin story across numerous articles, before posting the piece in question: [Coronavirus Bioweapon – How China Stole Coronavirus From Canada and Weaponized It](#). This article, despite being two months old, is still a pinned post at the top of their homepage. Since its publication, they have inserted backlinks to older articles and published approximately 30 supplementary articles using their bioweapons claims as a base to construct a timeline for this conspiracy.

The viral article contains a Wikipedia-like contents panel, giving their assertions a sense of concrete structure and logical flow:



GGI begins their construction of the article by establishing credibility with a link to a peer-reviewed medical paper: ‘Isolation of a novel coronavirus from a man with pneumonia in Saudi Arabia’ in the New England Journal of Medicine. They then link to an article from 16/05/2013, [Canadian Lab Acquires Coronavirus Sample](#), that had been lifted word-for-word from [an article published two days prior](#) by Helen Branswell of The Canadian Press, though no credit is given. A small line of text indicates that this article had been modified on 12/02/2020 to link to Great Game India’s Coronavirus articles and to weave this news into the narrative they assembled.



Much of the rest of the viral article is constructed in the same way, backlinking to previous Great Game India reporting, often using other news outlets as a source (often CBC), and sensationalising claims to fit their constructed narrative. A key example is their reporting on Dr. Frank Plummer, a renowned HIV/AIDS researcher who died in Kenya shortly after Great Game India’s viral article was published. [CBC reported on his death and gave information about his life](#), while Great Game India, despite linking to CBC’s story, ran the headline [Frank Plummer – Canadian Scientist Key To Coronavirus Investigation Assassinated In Africa?](#) Beyond the headline, there is no... further reference to assassination or evidence given to support the claim. Similar sensationalising and conjecture can be found across their report. For instance, the Chinese researchers to which their story refers were ejected from the Canadian laboratory due to an administrative error. Great Game India reported on this as such, but with “administrative error” marked in scare quotes, and linking this incident to the unrelated arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wangzhou by Canadian authorities.

Continued on next page...

As shown in the table of contents above, they frame this sequence of events as “Chinese Biological Espionage”.

Great Game India’s viral article and wider reporting on Coronavirus is constructed in a way to mask elements of truthful reporting and legitimate sources through a network of links back to their own website. These backlinks often land on tagged article lists, repeat to link back to the same article, or otherwise keep readers on Great Game India’s website rather than leaving to assess the sources they (rarely) link to.

Dr. Dany Shoham, medical microbiologist and ex-IDF agent, pointed out the links between Canada and the institute in Wuhan in an interview with the Washington Times on the same day Great Game India published their piece and was quoted in articles that appeared in several other media outlets.

26/01/2020
Same day as GGI piece

[Washington Times Outlook India](#)

There are important questions regarding Great Game India’s motives. Though they do mention him in their article, the Winnipeg-Wuhan links are not attributed to Dr. Shoham presented as fruits of their own research. They do, however, give prominence to a 2015 paper published by Shoham in the [Journal of Defence Studies](#), detailing China’s biological warfare programme. Although the individual pieces of this theory can be traced back further than Great Game India, they compiled the elements into one cohesive whole in a surprisingly fast, coherent and effective manner, which may explain why this particular article was picked up by Zero Hedge and thereafter went viral.

Great Game India relies on brief input from academics and professionals to help bolster their narrative. After the release of their viral article, they published an interview with Dr. Francis Boyle. Boyle is a human rights lawyer who drafted the Bio Weapons Act signed into law by George H. W. Bush and author of the book *Biowarfare and Terrorism*.

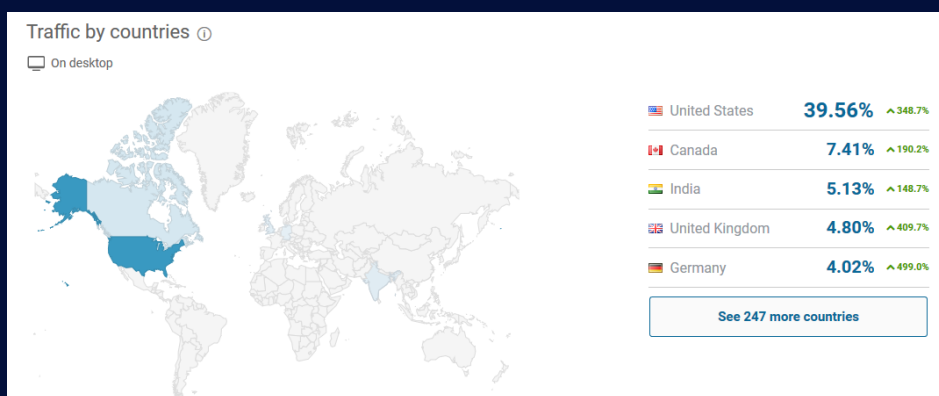
Great Game India present this interview - [originally published by the podcast Geopolitics & Empire](#) – as evidence that COVID-19 is a lab-made bioweapon. [Their transcript of this interview](#) and an [editorialised story](#) based on it have been reposted across the internet word-for-word under the Great Game India name and others. Great Game India’s [editorialised version](#) links back only to previous Great Game India content.

It must be noted that, despite Dr. Boyle’s background and history, 7 out of 10 first-page Google results for Dr. Francis Boyle are reposts or related directly to the Geopolitics and Empire interview. This trend continues for the second and third pages of Google too. Examples of which are as follows:

- [The Economic Times India](#) - current first result ahead of Dr. Boyle’s Wikipedia page.
- [Mercola.com](#)
- [Freepress.org](#)
- [Just-international.org](#)

Following their publication of their original viral article and further reports, Great Game India have also published an infographic based on their claims. This infographic serves to add a sensationalist visual component designed for further viral spread, simplify their story - asserting their claims as fact (such as the ‘assassination’ of Dr. Frank Plummer), and generally creates another level of abstraction between any concrete evidence and the narrative assembled and spread by Great Game India.

Traffic by countries [greatgameindia.com](#)



OSINT on Founders and History of Great Game India

According to their “about” page, Great Game India was founded and is run by ‘Raja Sekhar’ and Shelley Kasli. ‘Raja Sekhar’'s bio on Great Game India lists a postgraduate degree in Geopolitics and International Relations, and an impressive list of research expertise – including Economic Warfare, Electronic Warfare, and Counter-Terrorism. According to a profile on Zoominfo.com, prior to founding Great Game India, he was the Vice President of the Bajirao Peshwa Organisation, but there is no trace of that organisation through conventional search engines. Further Open-Source Intelligence investigation revealed that Raja Sekhar is [Gouravaram Rajasekhar](#). According to LinkedIn, Rajasekhar was the Vice President of the Bajirao Peshwa Organisation (“a non profit and noble organisation which strives for establishing knowledge hubs in rural societies to spread awareness on real world life”) and a Research Associate for Mordor Intelligence, specialising in Market Research. Presently, he lists himself as the Co-Founder and Editor in Chief of Great Game India since 2014, and a Political Consultant for the Indian Political Action Committee.

This consulting role may be linked to [Avaasat Consultancy Private Limited](#), a company with no web presence, but which is listed on tofler.in and a variety of other corporate detailing websites as having both Gouravaram Rajasekhar and Shelley Kasli as founders and directors.

In addition to this timeline, Shelley Kasli has a significant online web presence as an author, publishing articles that often re-use content across a variety of fringe and ‘alternative’ news websites. Below is a list, but this is also presented as a spreadsheet in an appendix.

Shelley Kasli has published in the following:

- [GGI News](#) - Shelley's first article for which offers a pro-Putin stance for India.
- [Indian Defence Review](#) - articles re-used from Great Game India.
- [Vijayvaani](#)
- [Eurasia Review](#) - as Great Game India.
- [Voltaire Network](#)
- [Geopolitical Monitor](#)
- [Countercurrents](#) - a search through their website's search bar reveals that Shelley had been [publishing articles via Facebook notes](#). These have been referenced in a variety of other news websites.
- [Nexus Newsfeed](#)
- [Journal of Eurasian Affairs](#) - credited as founder of Great Game India with Gouravaram Rajasekhar as a co-author (not credited with any association with Great Game India).

Great Game India's other co-founder, Shelley Kasli has a more pronounced web presence and it is here where a history of Great Game India can be pieced together:

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Vimeo profile

Shelley's Vimeo profile is the earliest trace of his web-presence. He bills himself as “an aspiring creative artist who is looking to become a filmmaker/director in his future.”

2009

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YouTube profile

Linked from his Vimeo profile is an unremarkable YouTube profile that largely consists of music playlists. However, the key here is that the profile image is the Great Game India Logo.

2010

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Wildchild Studios

Another link is to a now-defunct blogspot for Shelley's Wildchild Studios. The URL suggests a change in name at some point. His company appears to specialise in making corporate promotional videos and renders.

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Here, a change occurs.

Linked from Wildchild Studios/Dream Realm Studios is a prototypical version of Great Game India. This early blogspot appears to be a repository for long-form essays along similar themes to Great Game India's later output on their registered domain. Interestingly, there is no trace of Gouravaram Rajasekhar in this early iteration of Great Game India.

2012

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Great Game India blogspot

A pivot to journalism and the beginnings of Great Game India.

2014

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Great Game India domain registered and site begins publishing.

2017

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GGI News registered

2018

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GGI Andhra registered.

A regional venture that is now defunct.





The Centre for Research on Globalization, Katehon, and Geopolitika

In addition to the websites above are three key places that Shelley Kasli has published.

The first is the Centre for Research on Globalization - “an independent research and media organization based in Montreal” that has [a known climate change denial agenda](#).

// Shelley Kasli's [Author Profile](#).

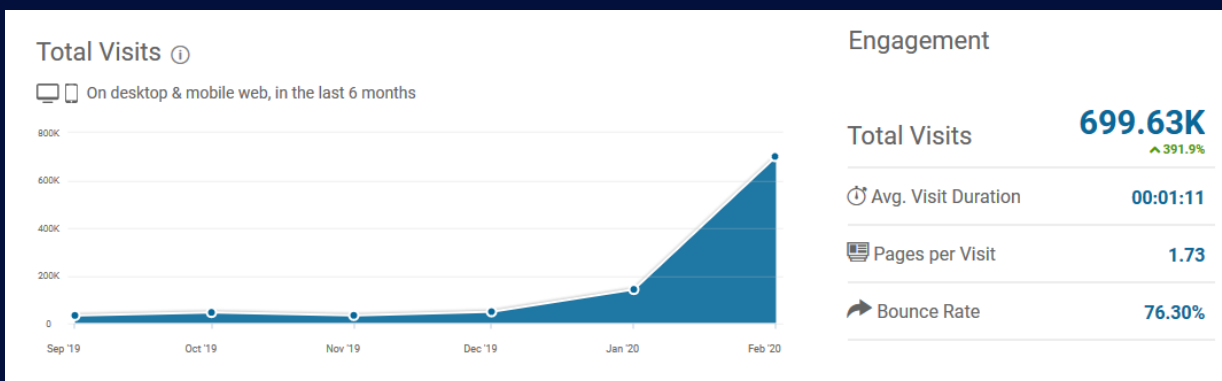
The second website to note is Katehon. [A known right-wing think tank](#) based in Russia. Authors listed alongside Shelley Kasli on Katehon include Marie le Pen.

// Shelley Kasli's [Author Profile](#).

Finally, Kasli has a presence on Geopolitica/Geopolitika.ru. This site shares the layout of Katehon, as well as staff in the form of [Leonid Savin](#) as chief editor for both and a self-described “Head of the Administration of the International Social Movement “Eurasian Movement”. Geopolitica.ru features Aleksandr Dugin as a regular contributor; [a major influence on anti-liberal ideological discourse in Russia](#) and foundational thinker in neo-Eurasianism. Dugin is known to have close links with high-level Russian officials, having served as an advisor to Gennadiy Seleznyov, and his book, [Foundations of Geopolitics](#) is said to have had a massive influence on Russian foreign policy.

// Shelley Kasli's [Author Profile](#).

Total Visits [greatgameindia.com](#)



Conclusion

Possibly the most striking thing about Great Game India and its role in the spread of arguably the most alarming conspiracy theory surrounding COVID-19 is how relatively unimpactful their relatively consistent output had been up until this point.

More research is needed to establish whether Great Game India's framing of this story in such a way as to get immediately picked up by Zero Hedge was coordinated to any degree, or if they just happened upon the right viral conspiracy at the right time. Regardless, it should be stressed that Great Game India was able to play such a pivotal role in spreading the 'COVID-19-as-bioweapon' narrative only because it had hitherto been regarded as insufficiently impactful to be targeted by misinformation prevention measures on major platforms.

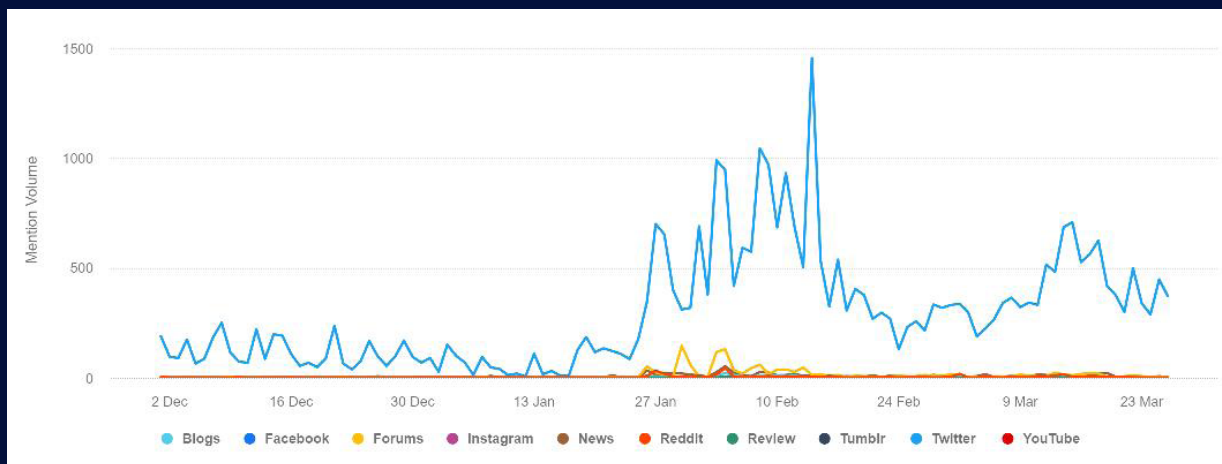
Deeper investigation is necessary to establish Great Game India's ties and connections as it clearly highlights a pattern of publication across a network of websites deliberately promoting hoaxes and disinformation, including a known think-tank in Russia and a site heavily associated with Aleksandr Dugin. Future investigations should focus on:

- The rapid growth of Great Game India from the Blog of Shelley Kasli to a news resource operating from multiple domains.
- Shelley Kasli's publication history and ties to the Neo-Eurasianist movement.
- Avaasat Consultancy Private Limited - the company set up by Gouravaram Rajasekhar and Shelley Kasli in 2017.
- Rajasekhar's role as a political consultant with the Indian Political Advocacy Committee (I-Pac).

As we hope we have demonstrated in this report, Logically Intelligence Investigation techniques can reveal connections and provide greater insight into organisations that publish disinformation than surface-level debunking operations. Rather than showing Great Game India as a fringe outfit, it is the conclusion of this report that they are very likely an active node in a network of disinformation websites that seek to disseminate conspiracies organically by seeding hoaxes on larger websites, generating more impact than their own small readership would indicate.



Growing References to GGI in the Media and on Social Media



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