



The Burke Institute: a Russian influence operation run with ChatGPT

OpenAI has banned accounts it assesses were run from Russia through VPNs, promoting an outfit calling itself the International Burke Institute - a Tel Aviv address, a roster of distinguished names, and a sovereignty index that ranked Russia well.

INCIDENT DETAILS • 5WH

Who OpenAI disclosed and disrupted. Operators assessed as Russia-origin, using VPNs to reach a service unavailable in Russia. The institute rejects the characterisation.

What A covert influence operation built around a fabricated research institute. ChatGPT wrote the promotional posts; the site's articles were copied from real academic writing.

Where Seeded across Substack, Telegram, X, Facebook and LinkedIn; the website gave an Israeli address.

When Website registered Feb 2025; articles Sep 2025 to May 2026. OpenAI published 25 Aug 2026.

Why To manufacture independent-looking expertise and launder pro-Moscow argument through it.

How A fabricated institute, copied scholarship, an index, and machine-written promotion.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Feb 2025 The website is registered

Sep 2025-May 2026 34 of 36 sampled articles copied

25 Aug 2026 OpenAI bans the cluster and publishes

- 1 A website appears with a Tel Aviv address
- 2 It is filled with other people's work
- 3 Fukuyama and Chomsky appear on the roster
- 4 A sovereignty index ranks Russia well
- 5 ChatGPT writes the promotion, markers stripped
- 6 25 Aug: the ban, the report, and a denial

IMPACT

- Reach: limited. Individual posts drew few views, though linked Telegram channels each carried ten to twenty thousand followers.
- Scholars: academics were listed as affiliates without involvement and work republished under the wrong names.
- Credibility: the risk is not the audience but the citation - it is built to be quoted by someone else.
- Tradecraft: hiding linguistic markers on request and laundering copied scholarship are now documented and can be looked for.

ASSESSMENT, LESSONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The product is not reach, it is a citable source - one legitimate citation supplies the audience.
- The AI did the least interesting part; humans built the fraud over eighteen months.
- Borrowed names are the cheapest credibility available and the hardest to police.
- The denial belongs in the record and does not resolve it; the site remains online.