

Twitter Thread by G5 Internet Observatory



G5 Internet Observatory

@G5iO



G5iO #AfghanLeaks| Disinformation & Propaganda Campaign to Sabotage Afghan Peace Process

As a flagship study, G5iO undertook data analytics to deconstruct coordinated disinformation & Info-Ops being undertaken by both India & Afghanistan to derail Afghan Peace Process [Thread]



Evidence indicates extensive use of bots, coordinated network behaviour and fake news pushed across [@Twitter](#) from sources linked to Afghanistan and Indian state machinery.

The frequency and intensity of these campaigns increased dramatically over the last 3 months once:

- US announced a final withdrawal date
- The Taliban gained military victories

Methodology:

- Twitter data was scraped from May 2020 – Aug 2021
- The data indicated key narratives, networks and user accounts running disinformation operations
- Insights were developed using comparative analysis of online hashtag activity with offline political and regional security events
- Artificial activity was defined as any activity from accounts engaged in platform manipulation, recently created and pushing inorganic content

Key narratives:

Key narratives indicate coordinated disinformation campaign led by India & Afghanistan targeting Pakistan Army, fanning ethnic nationalism, spreading fake news over FATF, & blaming Pakistan for the current crisis in Afghanistan

KEY NARRATIVES

Both India and Afghanistan have employed overlapping narratives in their state led propaganda campaigns against Pakistan



Target Pakistan's security institutions for its role in the Afghan peace process

Blame Pakistan's security institutions for spreading chaos in Afghanistan

Fan Baloch and Pashtun separatism in Pakistan to play a spoiler role in Afghanistan

Leverage a Pan-Pashtun culture and identity to politicize and securitize the Pak-Afghan border

Conflate Pakistan with Terrorism - push for sanctions such as under FATF

Legitimize own rule via portraying Pakistan as a security threat

Discredit Taliban as a Pakistan sponsored proxy to derail inter-Afghan

Discredit Taliban as a foreign proxy unworthy of peace dialogue

Criticize the Biden government for abandoning the Afghan government

Criticize the US government for providing political legitimacy to the Taliban



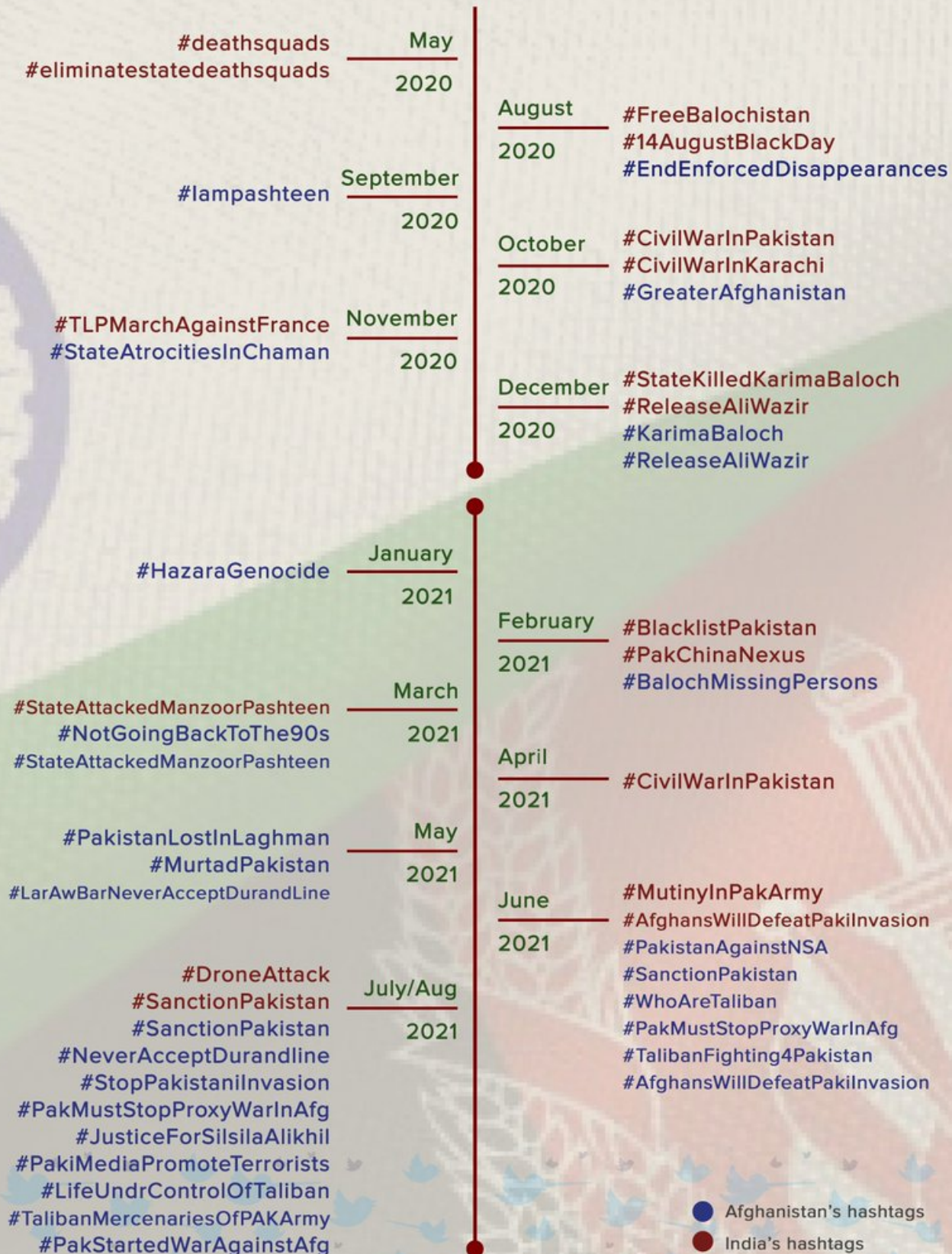
Timeline:

The data visualized through a timeline maps how the targeted campaign against Pakistan has been carefully choreographed & timed to sabotage & discredit Pakistan's efforts for peace in Afghanistan.

It also shows attempts to destabilize Pakistan through fake news

TIMELINE OF DISINFORMATION & PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN TO SABOTAGE AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS



The following outlines the social media hashtags centered around state run disinformation campaigns by both India and Afghanistan



Details of Coordinated Network Activity:

The following highlights how most of these campaigns comprised:

- Of known state-linked accounts
- Of a considerable level of artificial activity

DETAILS OF COORDINATED NETWORK ACTIVITY BY INDIA & AFGHANISTAN					G5iO Digital Analytics & Insights
Hashtag	Started On (UTC +5)	Started By	Bot Activity	Key Accounts	
#PakistanLostInLaghman	2021-05-27	 @ata_afghanistan	33.8%	@ata_afghanistan, @kabul_voice	
#PakistanAgainstNSA	2021-06-07	@lufvmwecdwsw6r	36.1%	@t0bhdhkursjx5zw, @anisfrotan	
#PakMustStopProxyWarInAfg	2021-06-15	@l_Jabarkhai	22.2%	@sohailnoorkhan, @l_Jabarkhail	
#EndPakProxyWarInAfg	2021-07-09	@afghan_youths	45.4%	@pashtonnaseer, @achakzai__raziq	
#StopPakistaniInvasion	2021-07-10	@habibkhant	26.6%	@mursalghani @shpoon1919	
#SanctionPakistan	2021-07-30	@jason_c_howk	65%	@MitraHabibzad, @abani40, @calexanderaf, @jason_c_howk	
#MutinyInPakArmy	2019-08-1	 @veteranjeev	21.81%	@veteranjeev @dramjadamirza	
#PakChinaNexus	2017-07-2	@roypp22	37.68%	@roypp22 @tahassiddiqui	
#BlacklistPakistan	2015-03-1	@meenadasnarayan	24.4%	@shilpa__p @kakar_harsha	
#CivilWarInPakistan	2013-01-11	@theedge37	40.26%	@himansh52521723 @meghupdates	

Sample of Content propagated:

The following hashtags & tweets present just a glimpse of the kind of content & narratives being pushed by both Indian & Afghan sponsored content mills.

SAMPLES OF CONTENT PROPAGATED

#SanctionPakistan

#CivilWarInPakistan



Case Study: The hashtag SanctionPakistan presents a good example.

- Used since 2016 by Indian backed propaganda accounts.
- Since June 2021, used as part of a coordinated propaganda campaign by the Afghan government
- Used more aggressively by India & Afg since US withdrawal

NUMBER OF TWEETS FOR #SanctionPakistan (2021)



The same hashtag was artificially pushed on 9th-10th August by mostly Indian & Afghan sponsored accounts to around 300k tweets out of which 60% was artificial activity.



Conclusion: Social Media is not just social media anymore, it has real-world consequences on societies & individuals, many that do not even have internet.

Ethical use of Social Media is pivotal for peace & prosperity globally. Fighting Disinformation, therefore, is critical.

The study can be downloaded from our webpage:

<https://t.co/DNqoqaa6hV>