Twitter Thread by G5 Internet Observatory

G5 Internet Observatory
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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

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

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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

May 2020
#deathsquads
#eliminatestatedeathsquads

August 2020
#FreeBalochistan
#14AugustBlackDay
#EndEnforcedDisappearances

September 2020
#lampashteen

October 2020
#CivilWarInPakistan
#CivilWarInKarachi
#GreaterAfghanistan

November 2020
#TLPMarchAgainstFrance
#StateAtrocitiesInChaman

December 2020
#StateKilledKarimaBaloch
#ReleaseAliWazir
#KarimaBaloch
#ReleaseAliWazir

January 2021
#HazaraGenocide

February 2021
#BlacklistPakistan
#PakChinaNexus
#BalochMissingPersons

March 2021
#StateAttackedManzoorPashteen
#NotGoingBackToThe90s
#StateAttackedManzoorPashteen

April 2021
#CivilWarInPakistan

May 2021
#PakistanLostInLaghman
#MurtadPakistan
#LarAwBarNeverAcceptDurandLine

June 2021
#MutinyInPakArmy
#AfghansWillDefeatPakiInvasion
#PakistanAgainstNSA
#SanctionPakistan
#WhoAreTaliban
#PakMustStopProxyWarInAfg
#TalibanFighting4Pakistan
#AfghansWillDefeatPakiInvasion

July/Aug 2021
#DroneAttack
#SanctionPakistan
#SanctionPakistan
#NeverAcceptDurandline
#StopPakistaniInvasion
#PakMustStopProxyWarInAfg
#JusticeForSilsilaAlikhil
#PakiMediaPromoteTerrorists
#LifeUndrControlOfTaliban
#TalibanMercenariesOfPAKArmy
#PakStartedWarAgainstAfg

● Afghanistan's hashtags
● India's hashtags

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

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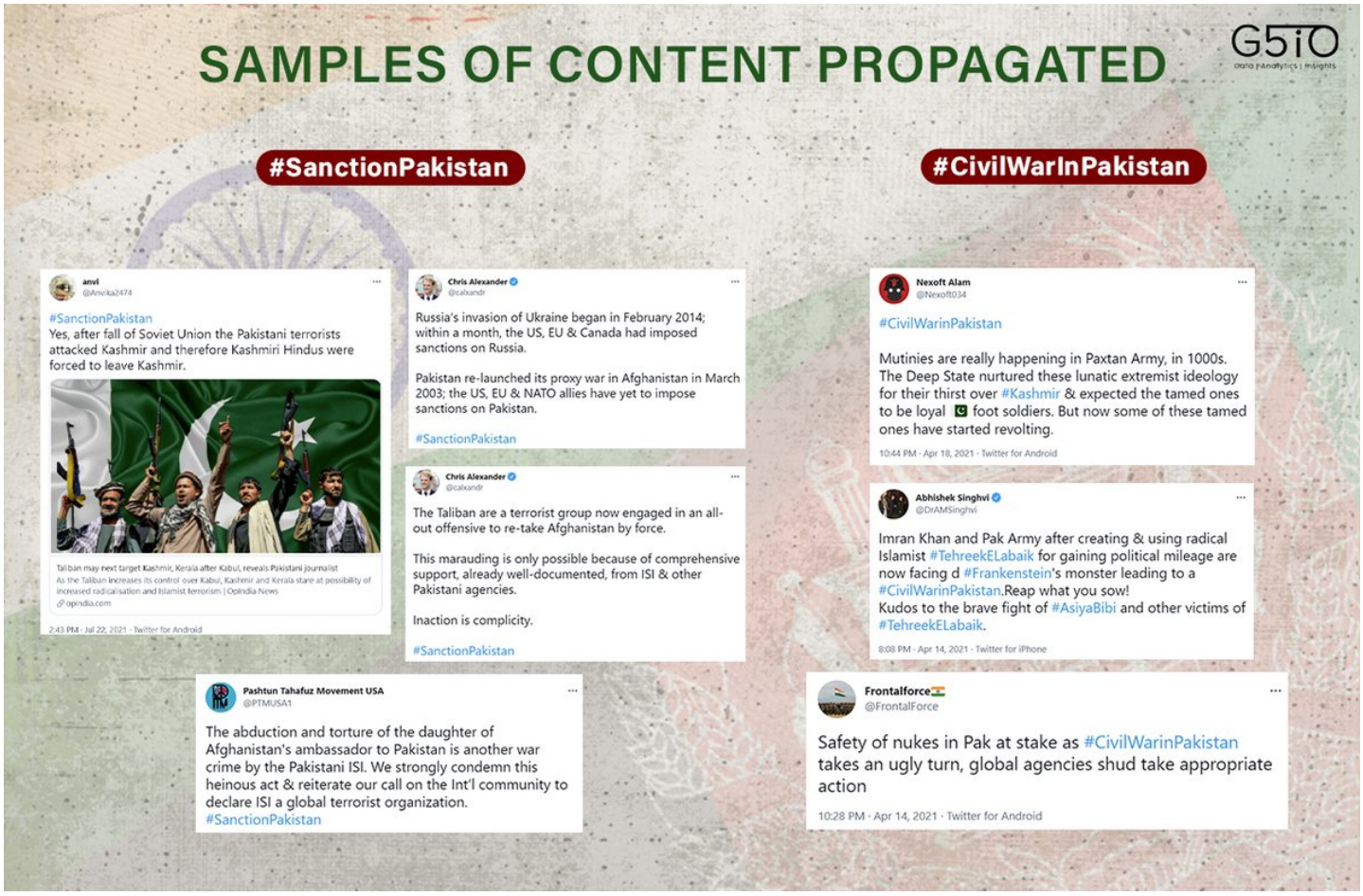
Hashtag	Started On (UTC +5)	Started By	Bot Activity	Key Accounts
#PakistanLostInLaghman	2021-05-27	@ata_afghanistan	33.8%	@ata_afghanistan, @kabul_voice
#PakistanAgainstNSA	2021-06-07	@lufvmwecdwsrw6r	36.1%	@t0bhdhkursjx5zw, @anisfrotan
#PakMustStopProxyWarInAfg	2021-06-15	@I_Jabarkhai	22.2%	@sohailnoorkhan, @I_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 @dramjadmirza
#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.

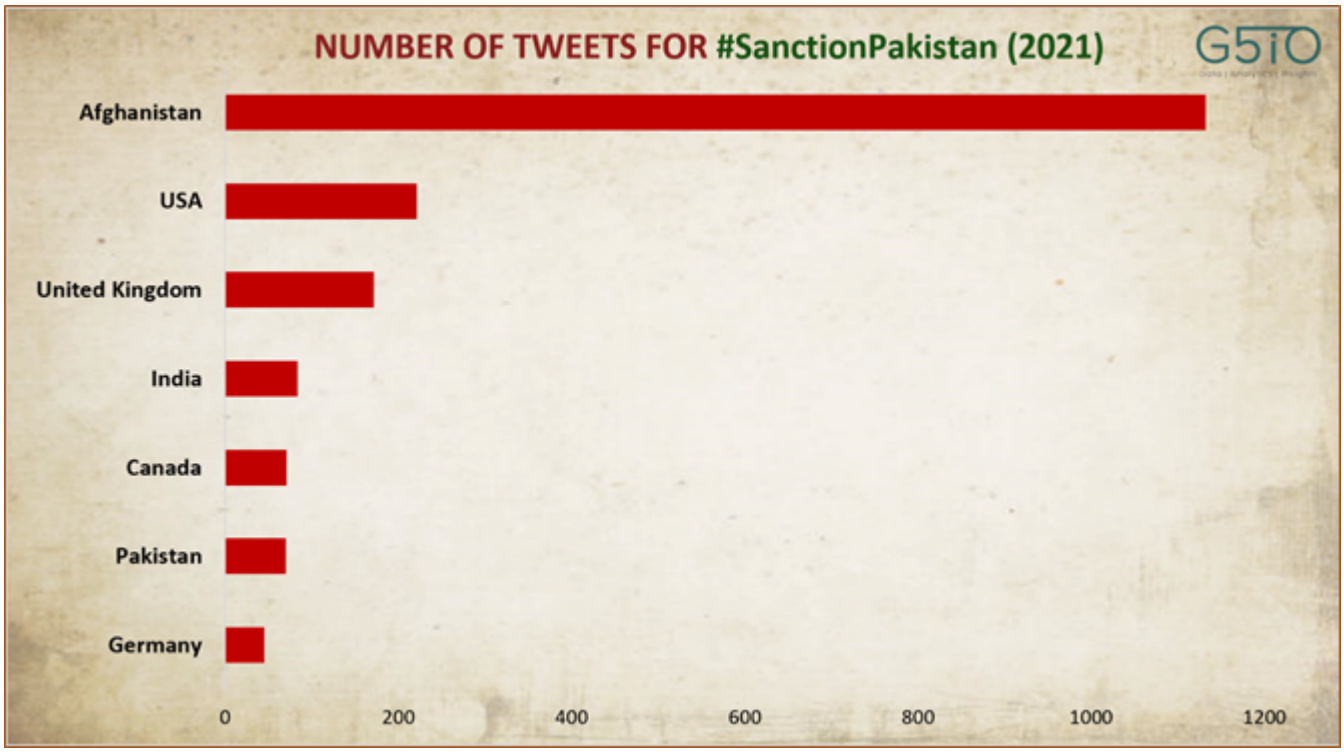


Case Study: The hashtag SanctionPakistan presents a good example.

•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



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