

Mapping Network Behavior and Coordinated Activity

A Study on Indian Info Ops

Waqas Jan
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Mapping Network Behavior and Coordinated Activity – A Study on Indian Info Ops

Overview

- This study maps the deeply integrated and coordinated social media campaigns of Indian Info Ops networks against its regional rivals (China and Pakistan)
- It does this by examining tweets related to Pakistan and China by some of the most prominent Indian voices on Twitter: 3 Indian journalists, 4 former military experts, and 3 sock-puppet accounts
- It shows how these accounts are part of a coordinated network of verified accounts linked with key state institutions and individuals all pushing a synchronous and specific narrative targeting its neighbors

Methodology

- The data analyzed comprises over 120k tweets from the last 3 years (Jan 2018 – Oct 2021)
- Findings were derived from:
 - Textual analysis of the most frequently recurring themes and hashtags specifically on Pakistan and China
 - Network analysis of the most frequent interactions between key accounts and their immediate clusters

Textual Analysis

Key Findings

- There is a marked and coordinated specificity in terms of how these accounts have projected an increasingly hawkish stance on Pakistan and China
- The most prominent themes associated with Pakistan and China are related to terrorism, ceasefire/ border violations and propaganda
- Tweeting patterns related to each country were strongly correlated around the following key events:
 - Hawkish statements related to Pakistan were predominantly based around the Balakot air- strikes, and the revocation of Article 370 in the disputed J&K region around 2019
 - Those related to China saw a significant rise as the LAC standoff intensified over the summer of 2020

I. Defense/ Security Journalists



Aditya Raj Kaul ✓

@AdityaRajKaul

Journalist. National Security, Diplomacy, Conflict. Kashmiri. @ACYPL Alum. Reportage: @cbcnews @ctvnews @timesofindia @cnnnews18 Faculty Int. Security Academy

📍 New Delhi, India 🌐 [instagram.com/adityarajkaul](https://www.instagram.com/adityarajkaul) 📅 Joined June 2009

8,392 Following 332.9K Followers



Shiv Aroor ✓

@ShivAroor

Executive Editor, @IndiaToday | Founder, @Livefist | Author of #IndiasMostFearless & Operation Jinnah | ✉ shivaroor@gmail.com

📍 Delhi 🌐 [instagram.com/ShivAroor](https://www.instagram.com/ShivAroor) 📅 Joined May 2010

384 Following 1M Followers



GAURAV C SAWANT ✓

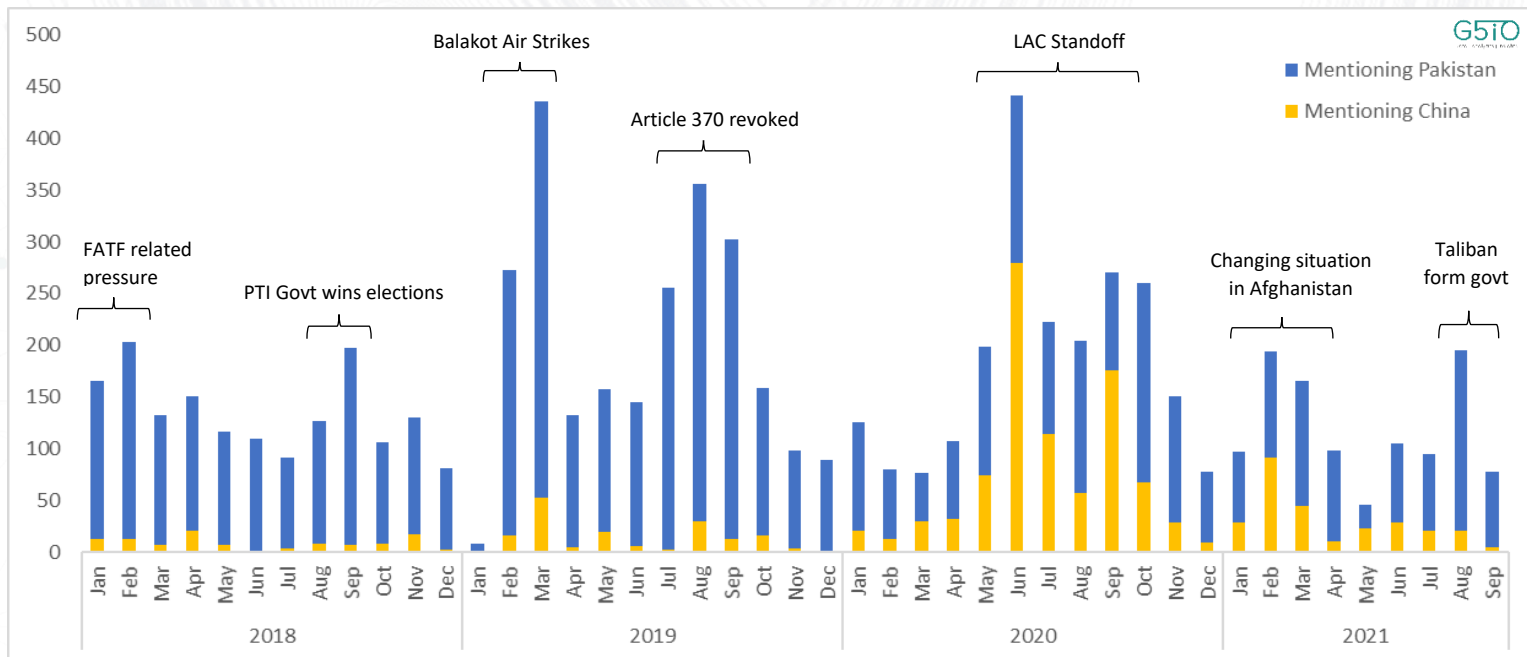
@gauravcsawant

Senior Executive Editor @IndiaToday, Anchor #IndiaFirst @ 10 pm & @aahtak at 3 pm. Author Dateline Kargil & #VeerGatha, 6 Para Jumps +1 AFF

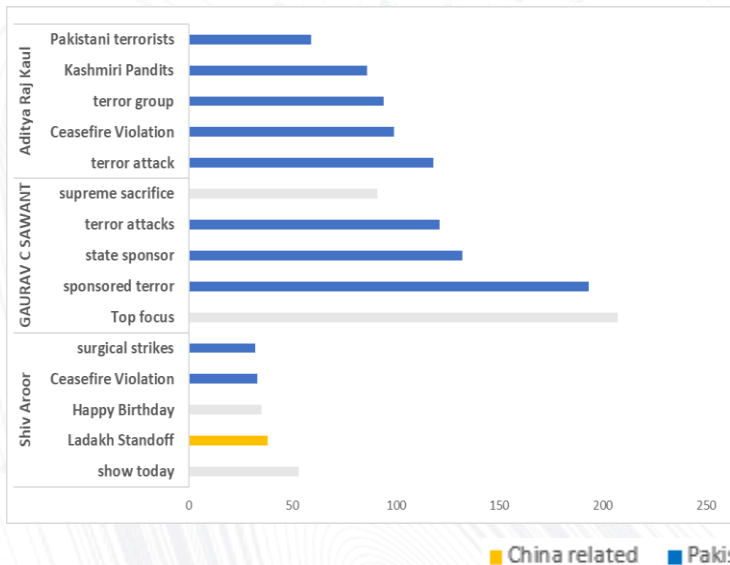
📍 BHARAT 📅 Joined August 2010

1,721 Following 1.4M Followers

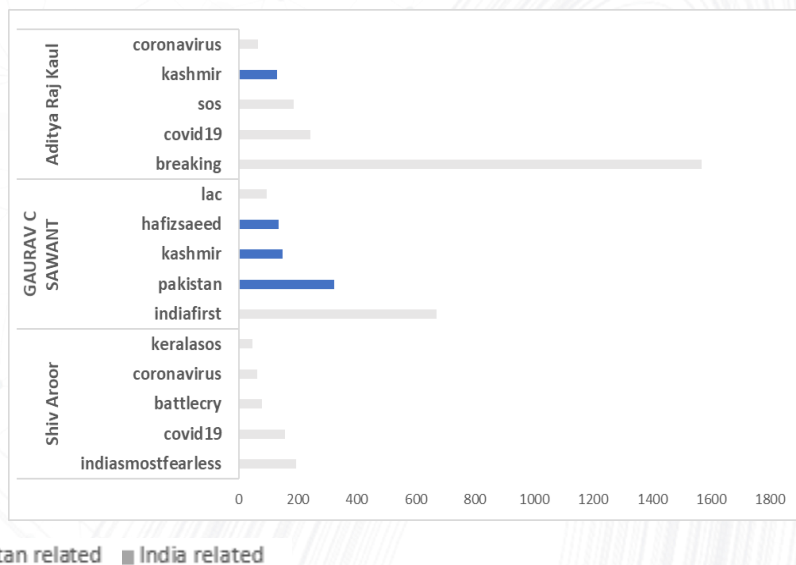
No of Tweets referring to Pakistan & China (Jan '18 – Sept '21)



Top 5 Themes (By no of times mentioned)

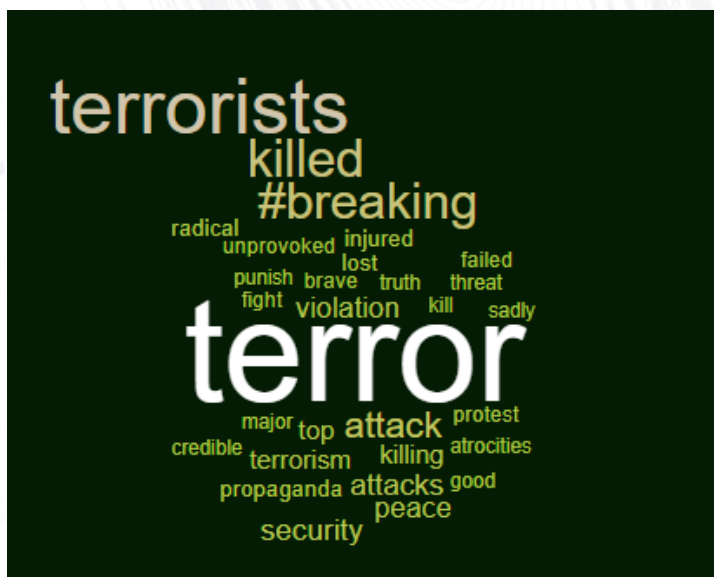


Top 5 Hashtags (By no of tweets)

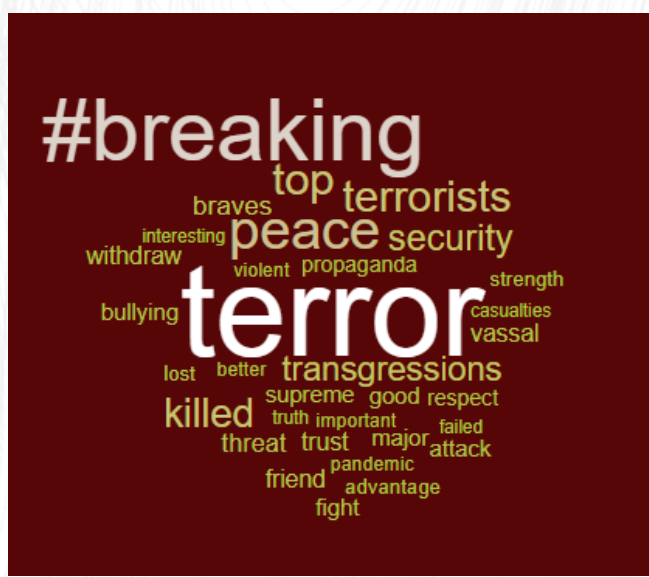


■ China related ■ Pakistan related ■ India related

Top Phrases related to Pakistan



Top Phrases related to China



II. Former Military Experts



Syed Ata Hasnain ✓
@atahasnain53
-Lt Gen (Retd), Indian Army, Former GOC 15 Corps
-Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir
-Member, National Disaster Mgt Authority - NDMA
📍 Delhi 🌐 atahasnain.wordpress.com 📅 Joined July 2013
248 Following 253K Followers



Maj Gen Harsha Kakar
@kakar_harsha
Retired Maj Gen. Writes for multiple portals. Balanced & mature views. Security expert on TV. Josh Talks & TED x. Motivational and national security speaker.
📍 Lucknow, India 🌐 harshakakararticles.com 📅 Joined June 2016
431 Following 47.3K Followers

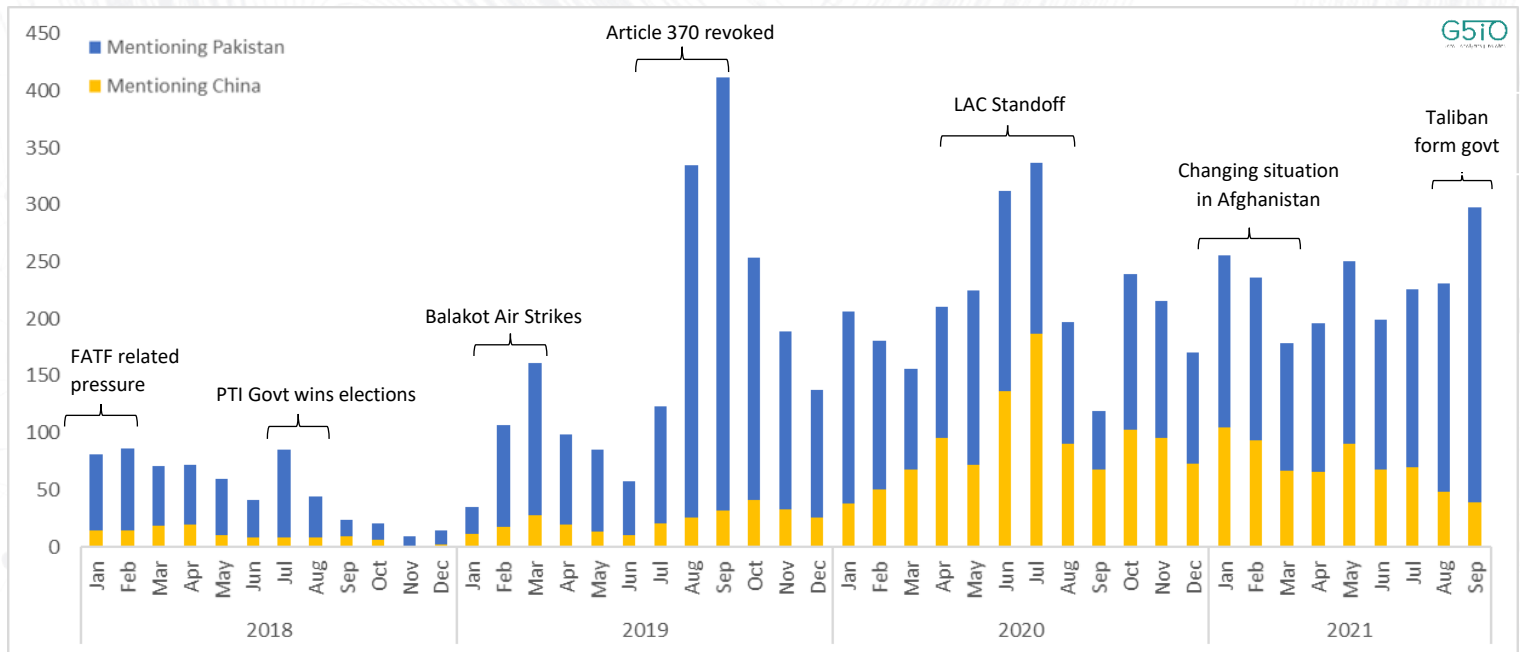


Major Gaurav Arya (Retd) ✓
@majorgauravarya
Editor-in-Chief at Chanakya Forum
📍 India 🌐 chanakyaforum.com 📅 Born September 25 📅 Joined July 2016
349 Following 1.2M Followers

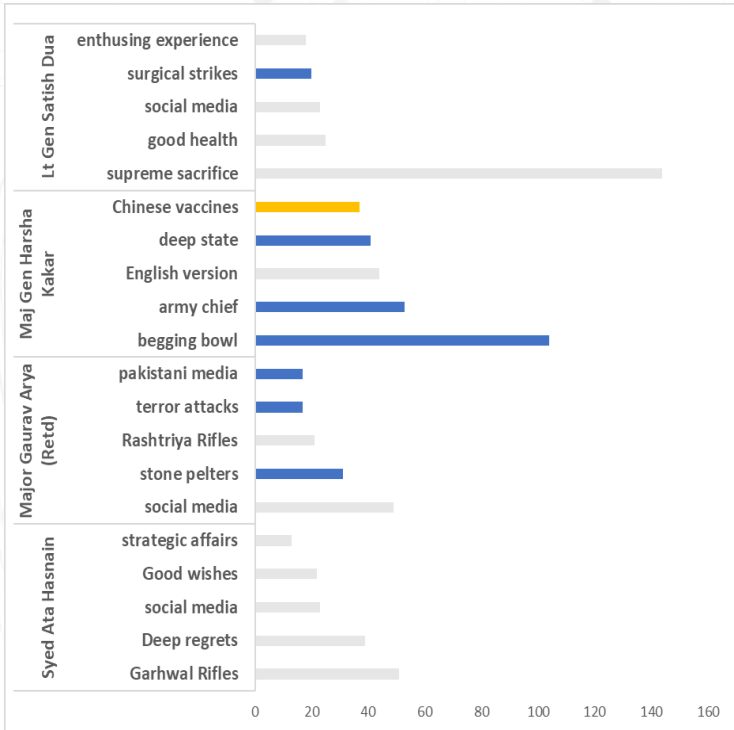


Lt Gen Satish Dua 🇮🇳 ✓
@TheSatishDua
Retd Army General • Former GOC 15 Corps, Kashmir • Retired as Chief of Integrated Defence Staff • Counter Terrorism expert • Author • Motivational/TEDx Speaker
📍 New Delhi, India 📅 Joined February 2016
119 Following 103K Followers

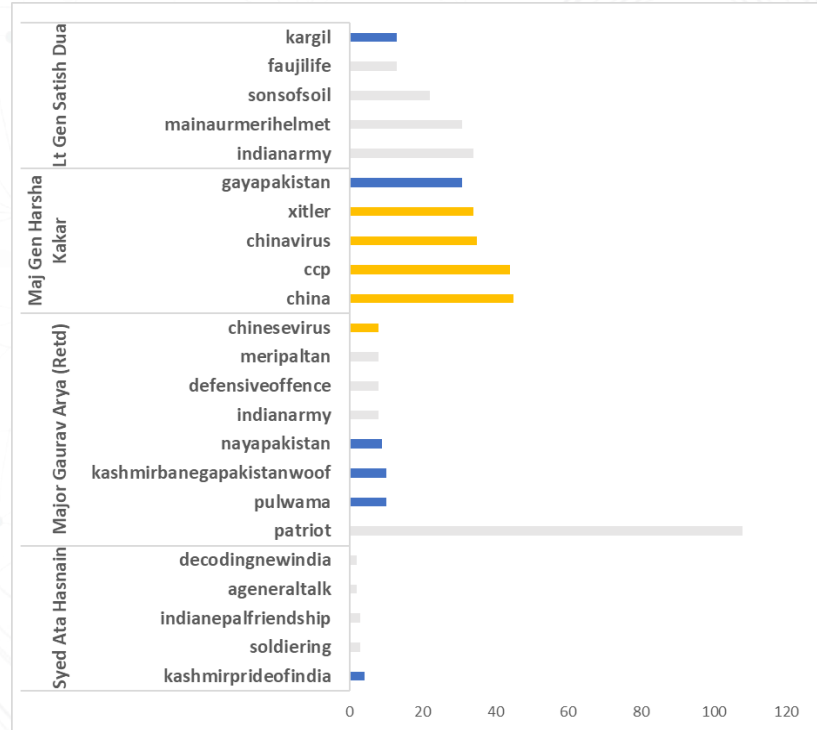
No of Tweets referring to Pakistan & China (Jan '18 – Sept '21)



Top 5 Themes (By no of times mentioned)



Top 5 Hashtags (By no of tweets)

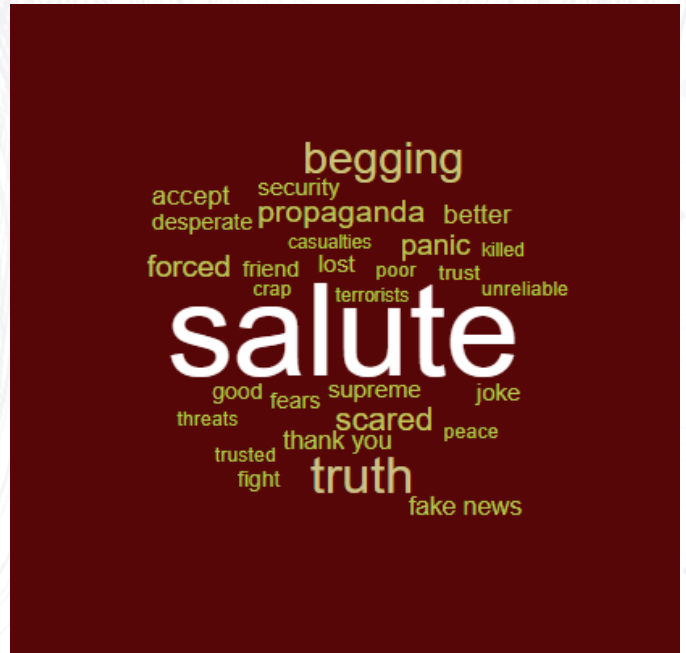


■ China related ■ Pakistan related ■ India related

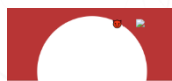
Top Phrases related to Pakistan



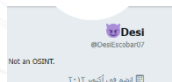
Top Phrases related to China



III. Sock-Puppet Accounts



@desiescobar07



This account doesn't exist

**This account has since been deactivated by twitter*



DFI Lite

@Dfilite

We are group of defence enthusiasts, we just putting location on Map from 🌐📍
#OSINT 🌐🌐🌐🌐🌐
youtube.com/channel/UChr2E...

📍 India 📅 Joined August 2018

87 Following 12.6K Followers



The WolfPack

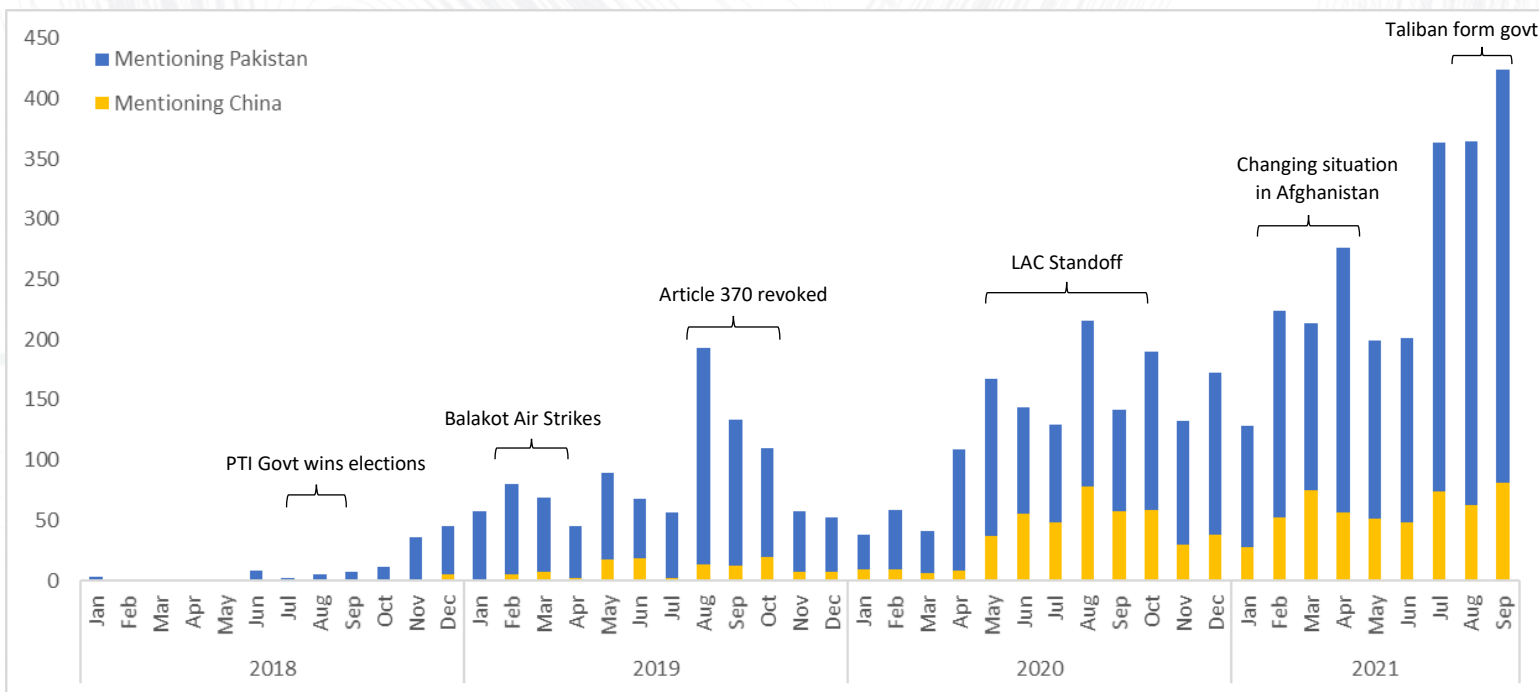
@TheWolfpackIN

Interested in National Security issues, Conflicts, Geopolitics, Aviation, Military Systems & Defence Affairs. Neutral politically. Agnostic. Independent.

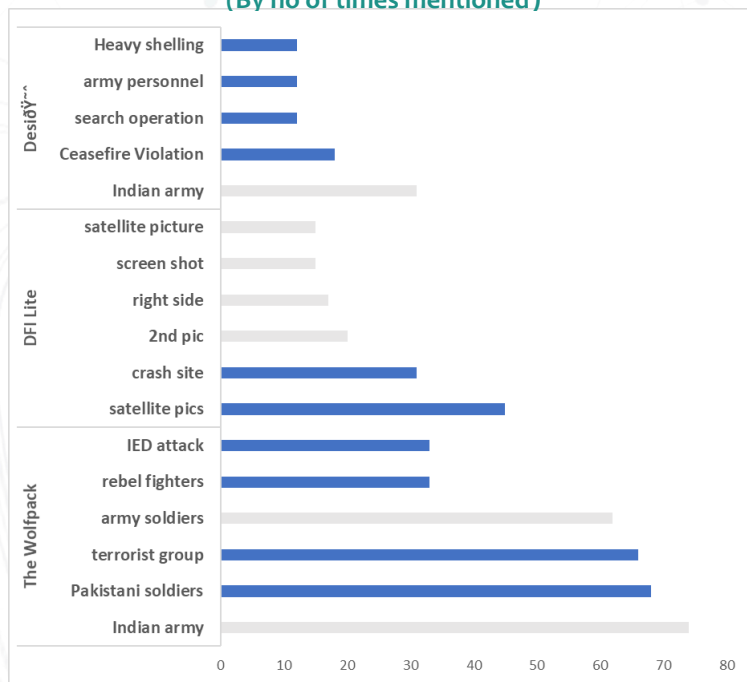
📍 Global 📅 Joined September 2017

1,903 Following 78.1K Followers

No of Tweets referring to Pakistan & China (Jan '18 – Sept '21)

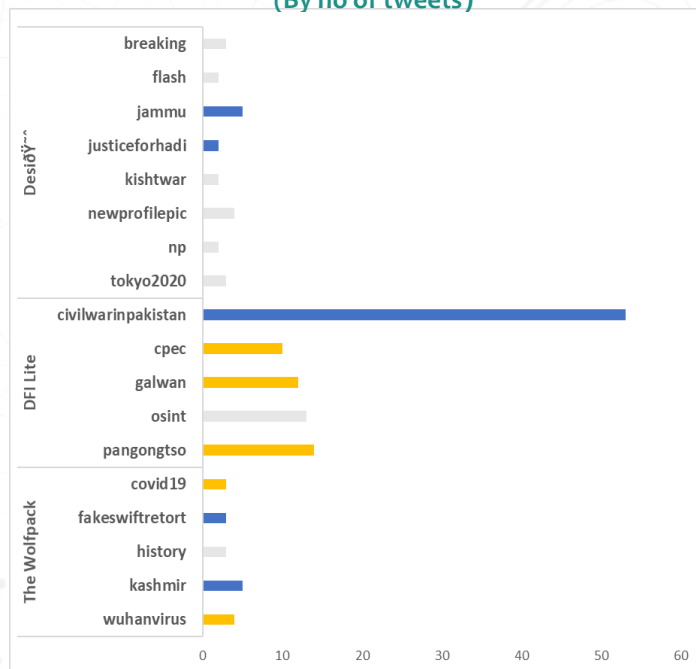


Top 5 Themes (By no of times mentioned)

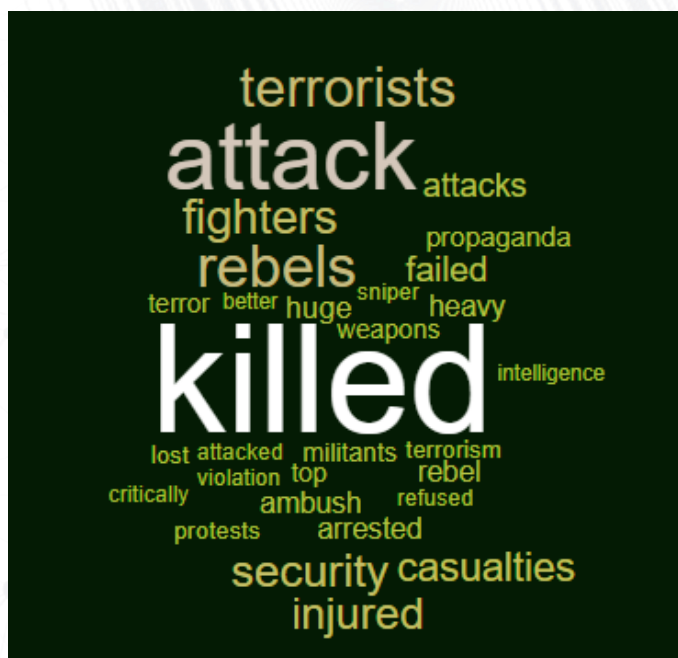


■ China related ■ Pakistan related ■ India related

Top 5 Hashtags (By no of tweets)



Top Phrases related to Pakistan



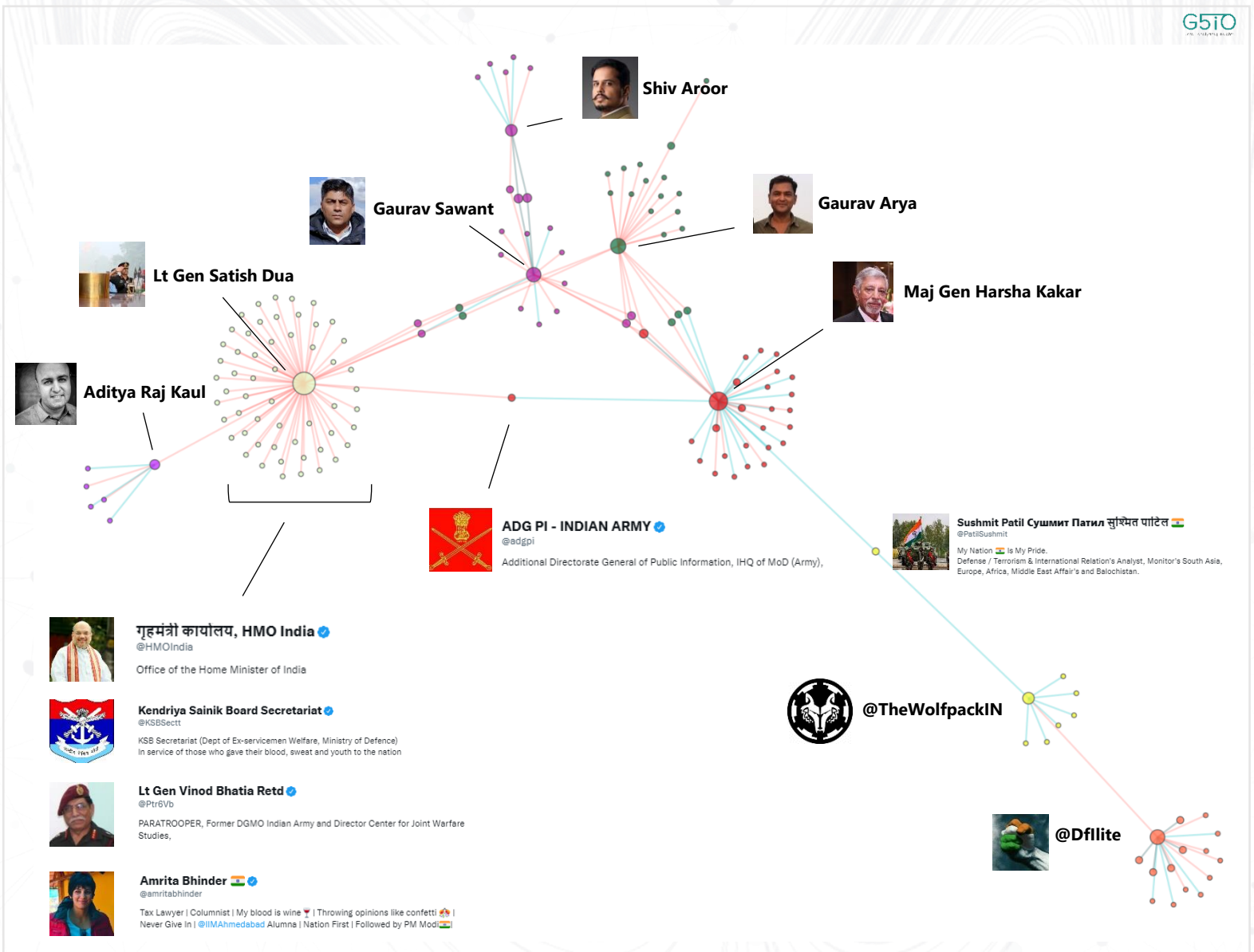
Top Phrases related to China



Network Analysis

Key Findings

- The relationships shown below are based on a set frequency of interactions between these accounts in the form of mentions, retweets, quotes, and replies
- Each cluster represents how the above-mentioned accounts are linked with one another as well as official state accounts such as the HMO and ADG PI
- The journalists and military experts being analyzed act as conduits between official narratives at the state level (top left) and hyper nationalized hawkish stances at the sock-puppet/ info ops levels (bottom right)



Conclusion

- There has been a marked surge in Indian information warfare against Pakistan and China following the 2018 elections in Pakistan
- Much of this conversation is coordinated between different sets of networks and actors used to amplify the Indian state's official narrative into increasingly hyper-nationalistic rhetoric
- The narratives being pushed are centered on framing Pakistan as a state sponsor of terror, and China as a hegemonic aggressor in the South Asian region

Author



M Waqas Jan is a Senior Analyst at G5iO with an interest in discursive approaches to South Asian peace, conflict, and security studies