



DigitalRightsFoundation
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Disinformation Campaign on Twitter: Pro-India accounts disseminating disinformation ahead of Pakistan FATF review

Digital Rights Foundation

October 21, 2020

Background

On the eve and day of October 21, 2020, there was a flurry of pro-India Twitter accounts creating the narrative that there was a 'civil war' unfolding in Pakistan, specifically in the country's largest urban center Karachi. Political developments from Pakistan such as protests from within the ranks of the Sindh police against the siege of the Inspector General House on October 19¹ and an explosion that left 5 people dead in Karachi on October 21² were weaponised to build a misleading narrative regarding the 'civil unrest' in the country. The cause of the explosion is under investigation, but there are credible reports that it was due to gas leakage, however the incident was used by various Twitter accounts of Indian origin to claim that it was a terrorist attack, in service of the narrative of Pakistan as a 'terrorist' and 'unstable' country. The timing of this disinformation campaign is not coincidental, it came at a time when Pakistan's status on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was under review via its virtual plenary session from October 21 to 23.³

¹ Imtiaz Ali, "Sindh IG defers leave, orders his officers to set aside their leave applications for 10 days," Dawn, October 21, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1586086/demoralised-and-shocked-senior-sindh-police-officials-request-for-leave-over-safdar-arrest-episode>.

² Qazi Hassan and Imtiaz Ali, "At least 5 dead, 20 injured in an explosion in Gulshan-i-Iqbal building in Karachi," Dawn, October 21, 2020, Dawn, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1586243/at-least-5-dead-20-injured-in-an-explosion-in-gulshan-i-iqbal-building-in-karachi>.

³ "Pakistan unlikely to exit FATF grey list: Country complies with 21 of 27 points in action plan, averting blacklist," The Express Tribune, October 20, 2020, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2269208/pakistan-unlikely-to-exit-fatf-grey-list>.

This report, put together by the research team at Digital Rights Foundation (DRF) has documented these trends on October 21, 2020.

Methodology

















DRF compiled a list of accounts and tweets spreading disinformation through extensive Twitter searches online using keywords such as “Karachi”, “Karachi blast”, “civil war” and “FATF” based on an early analysis of sample tweets being identified by fact-checkers in Pakistan. The tweets were catalogued on this [spreadsheet](#) which contains 86 tweets originating from a total of 62 accounts.



Main Trends






The disinformation campaign was executed by a combination of verified and unverified accounts, including accounts identifying as “news sources” as well as other accounts purportedly belonging to individuals.

The following is a list of primary accounts spreading disinformation, as identified by DRF’s team:

Handle	Link(s)	Screenshot
@ippatel (verified)	https://twitter.com/ippatel/status/1318617864862158853 https://twitter.com/ippatel/status/1318636220377956357 https://twitter.com/ippatel/status/1318761372054945792 https://twitter.com/ippatel/status/1318638331895439368	

		<p> Prashant Patel Umrao  @ippatel</p> <p>5 Pak Army officers are sent to Jannat by Sindh Police in Karachi after heavy firing when they tried to take custody of a Superintendent of Sindh Police Md. Aftab Anwar.</p> <p>12:40 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <hr/> <p>1.2K Retweets 121 Quote Tweets 4.5K Likes</p> <p> 258  1.3K  4.5K </p> <p> Prashant Patel Umrao  @ippatel</p> <p>Civil War like situation in Pakistan.</p> <p>Army-Police clash in Karanchi, many officers are died.</p> <p>Maximum Police Officers from Sindh have went on Leave. They are demanding Sindhu Desh.</p> <p>Imran has ordered to play Pak National songs on Radio.</p> <p>11:19 PM · Oct 20, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <hr/> <p>1.2K Retweets 492 Quote Tweets 3.5K Likes</p> <p> 492  1.7K  3.5K </p>
<p>@TimesNow (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/TimesNow/status/1318761205012389889</p>	<p> TIMES NOW  @TimesNow</p> <p>Protests in Pakistan snowball: Massive protests have erupted on streets. Slogans against Army-ISI.</p> <p>Pradeep with a report.</p> <p></p> <p>1:16 44.5K views </p> <p>8:49 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter Media Studio - LiveCut</p> <hr/> <p>85 Retweets 160 Quote Tweets 370 Likes</p>

<p>@ZeeNewsEnglish (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/ZeeNewsEnglish/status/131877940218310657 https://twitter.com/ZeeNewsEnglish/status/1318805675292741632</p>	<p>Zee News English @ZeeNewsEnglish</p> <p>'Civil War' like situation in Pakistan after reports of Army kidnapping Sindh police chief</p> <p>zeenews.india.com/world/civil-wa...</p> <p>#Pakistan #Karachi</p>  <p>'Civil War' like situation in Pakistan after reports of Army kidnapping Sindh poli... Pakistan Army chief General Bajwa on Tuesday ordered an enquiry into rumours that Sindh police chief was kidnapped by army.</p> <p>Zee News English @ZeeNewsEnglish</p> <p>3 dead, 15 injured in Karachi blast as 'civil war' like situation emerges in Pakistan</p> <p>zeenews.india.com/world/3-dead-1...</p> <p>#karachiblast #Karachi</p>  <p>3 dead, 15 injured in Karachi blast as 'civil war' like situation emerges in Pakistan At least three people died and around 15 got injured after an explosion hit a four-storey building in Pakistan's Karachi on Wednesday.</p>
<p>@NewsMobileIndia (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/NewsMobileIndia/status/1318807710805024768</p>	<p>NewsMobile @NewsMobileIndia</p> <p>Fresh Blast In Karachi, Civil War Like Situation After Reports Of Army Kidnapping Sindh Police Chief</p> <p>#KarachiBlast #Pakistan #CivilWar</p> <p>newsmobile.in/articles/2020/...</p> <p>11:53 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · TweetDeck</p> <p>5 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 8 Likes</p> <p>5 6 8</p>

<p>@TrulyMonica a (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/TrulyMonica/status/1318759351838937095</p>	<p> Monica ✓ @TrulyMonica</p> <p>How many Indian news outlets are covering the civil war in #Karachi ?</p> <p>Their silence and lack of coverage is a tribute to their masters in ISI and Pak military</p> <p>8:41 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <hr/> <p>516 Retweets 27 Quote Tweets 1.7K Likes</p> <hr/> <p>54 543 1.7K</p>
<p>@arunpudur (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/arunpudur/status/1318772826812248065</p>	<p> arun pudur ✓ @arunpudur</p> <p>Why no ISI media in India covering the #CivilWar in #Karachi ?</p> <p>#Sindh regiment soldiers on LoC vacating positions in Uri sector along LOC. So #POK is being cleared for India to reclaim?</p> <p>Over 200 Paki politicians arrested</p> <p>Pak Army attacking Pak Police</p>  <p>new page in The Plight of Pakistani Politics - Kreately Arresting opposition leaders is an old and stinking method to assert dominance.</p>
<p>@CNNnews (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/CNNnews18/status/1318893081496711170 (now removed) https://twitter.com/CNNnews18/status/1318945146407444481 https://twitter.com/CNNnews18/status/1318942805025173504 https://twitter.com/CNNnews18/status/1318923747684884481</p>	<p> CNNNews18 ✓ @CNNnews18 · 15m</p> <p>#ImranUnderSeige - Civil War breaks out in Pakistan.</p> <p>Clashes between Sindh Police and Pakistan Army.</p> <p>Chorus for Imran Khan's ouster grows.</p> <p>4 Opposition Parties Join forces against the Imran Khan government.</p> <p>Join @Zakka_Jacob on #ViewPoint</p>  <p>0:06 1.5K views</p> <hr/> <p>8 17 9</p>

IndiaToday @IndiaToday · 16h
Open rebellion against Imran Khan & Qamar Javed Bajwa! Watch all about the ugly Pak army Vs police face-off on #IndiaFirst with @GauravCSawant at 10:30 pm, only on India Today TV. #Promo





5 12 31

CNNNews18 @CNNnews18

#NewsAlert | Sindh government overthrown by Pak Army.
Park Army takes control over Pak media.
@AnchorAnandN with details.
Former Diplomat @AmbVPrakash shares his opinion.
Join the broadcast with @AnushaSoni23.



		<p>CNNNews18 @CNNnews18</p> <p>#ImranUnderSiege - Cops vs Army in Karachi, endgame Imran?</p> <p>Watch #News18Debrief with @shreyadhoundial</p> <p>IMRAN UNDER SIEGE 'HUMILIATED' SINDH COPS GO ON MASS LEAVE</p>  <p>3:44 49.3K views</p> <p>9:00 PM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter Media Studio - LiveCut</p> <p>1 Quote Tweet 3 Likes</p> <p>2 1 3</p> <hr/> <p>CNNNews18 @CNNnews18</p> <p>#ImranUnderSiege - Civil War breaks out in Pakistan.</p> <p>Clashes between Sindh Police and Pakistan Army.</p> <p>Chorus for Imran Khan's ouster grows.</p> <p>4 Opposition Parties Join forces against the Imran Khan government.</p> <p>Join @Zakka_Jacob on #BrassTacks</p> <p>PAKISTAN'S GAME OF THRONES</p>  <p>5:00 1.5K views</p> <p>8:50 PM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter Media Studio - LiveCut</p>
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		<p>CNNNews18 @CNNNews18</p> <p>#ImranUnderSeige - Civil War breaks out in Pakistan.</p> <p>Clashes between Sindh Police and Pakistan Army.</p> <p>Chorus for Imran Khan's ouster grows.</p> <p>Massive explosion in Karachi kills 5</p> <p>@Arunima24 reports from New Delhi.</p> <p>Join @AnchorAnandN on #TheRightStand</p>  <p>3:09 1K views</p>
<p>@IndiaToday (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/IndiaToday/status/1318908531228078083?s=20</p>	<p>IndiaToday @IndiaToday · 16h</p> <p>Open rebellion against Imran Khan & Qamar Javed Bajwa! Watch all about the ugly Pak army Vs police face-off on #IndiaFirst with @GauravCSawant at 10:30 pm, only on India Today TV. #Promo</p>  <p>0:20 3.1K views</p> <p>5 12 31</p>
<p>@OpIndia_com (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/OpIndia_com/status/1318952688533397505?s=20</p>	<p>OpIndia.com @OpIndia_com · 13h</p> <p>A civil war is brewing in Pakistan after deadly clashes broke out between Sindh police and Pakistani army over the illegal detention of Sindh police chief</p>  <p>Unrest in Karachi as violent clashes break out after Rangers abduct t... A civil war is brewing in Pakistan after deadly clashes broke out between Sindh police and Pakistani army over the illegal detention of ... opindia.com</p> <p>14 172 632</p>

<p>@AshishSinghNews (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/AshishSinghNews/status/1318606226322644992?s=20</p>	
<p>@indiatvnews (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/indiatvnews/status/1318943879173996544</p>	
<p>@AdityaRajKaul (verified)</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/AdityaRajKaul/status/1309779612751159296</p>	

@IFENetwor
k24

<https://twitter.com/IFENetwork24/status/1318625400470208512>
<https://twitter.com/IFENetwork24/status/1318632699259596800>
<https://twitter.com/IFENetwork24/status/1318639711020183553?s=20>

IFE Network 24
@IFENetwork24

#BreakingNews! FULL DETAILS

🔥 Civil War breaks out in Pakistan against #PakistanArmy. A Shocking turn of events in the 'failed-state' Pakistan has reported between Pak occupied #Sindh Police & PA #Karachi_Referendum2020

Share and Retweet!



11:49 PM · Oct 20, 2020 · Twitter Web App

88 Retweets 19 Quote Tweets 186 Likes

16 107 186

IFE Network 24
@IFENetwork24

#BreakingNews: 5 Pak Army officers died in Firing! Heavy fire between #PakistanArmy and #Sindh Police in #Karachi after Pak Army tried to take custody of a Superintendent of Sindh Police MD Aftab Anwar

Source : (The International Herald)

★Read On: ifenewsnetwork.com/civil-war-brea...

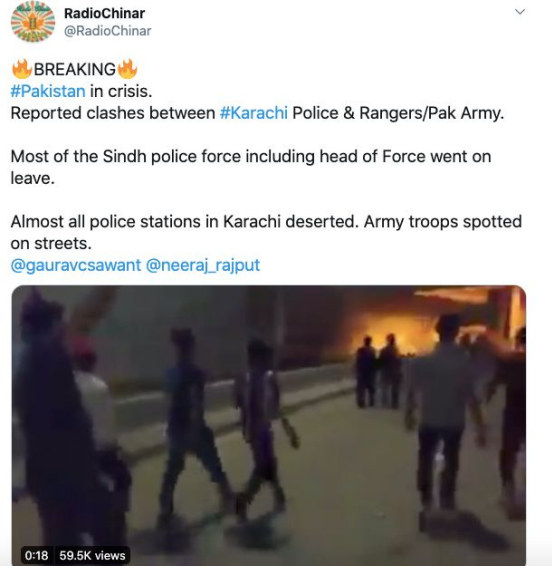





12:18 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter Web App



IFE Network 24 @IFENetwork24 · Oct 21
10 #Karachi police officers died in a clash with Pakistan Army: The International Herald







3 31 66



<p>@RadioChina r</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/RadioChinar/status/1318607458600824832</p>	 <p>RadioChinar @RadioChinar</p> <p>BREAKING #Pakistan in crisis. Reported clashes between #Karachi Police & Rangers/Pak Army.</p> <p>Most of the Sindh police force including head of Force went on leave.</p> <p>Almost all police stations in Karachi deserted. Army troops spotted on streets. @gauravcsawant @neeraj_rajput</p> <p>0:18 59.5K views</p>
<p>@TheIntlHerald</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/TheIntlHerald/status/1318640859756318722 https://twitter.com/TheIntlHerald/status/1318621341730308097 https://twitter.com/TheIntlHerald/status/1318635843075137536</p>	 <p>The International Herald @TheIntlHerald</p> <p>Women police officials of Pakistan's Sindh province seek leave after being ridiculed and sexually humiliated by Pakistani Army</p> <p>12:50 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>114 Retweets 8 Quote Tweets 285 Likes</p> <p>22 122 285</p> <hr/> <p>The International Herald @TheIntlHerald</p> <p>BREAKING : Civil war in Pakistan. Reported clashes between Karachi Police & Pak Army</p> <p>0:18 205.6K views</p> <p>11:33 PM · Oct 20, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>683 Retweets 190 Quote Tweets 1.6K Likes</p> <p>195 873 1.6K</p>



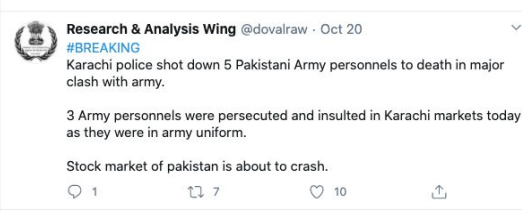

		
<p>@SindhPoliceDm</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/SindhPoliceDm https://twitter.com/SindhPoliceDm/status/1318626097601290242</p>	




		 <p>Sindh Police @SindhPoliceDm</p> <p>10 Karachi police officers died in Clashes between police and Pakistan Army #SindhPolice #SindhGovt #SindhRejectsIslandOrdinance #WeStandWithSindhPolice</p> <p>21:32 · 20/10/2020 · Twitter for Android</p>
<p>@lokshaktidaily</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/lokshaktidaily/status/1318886410062016512</p>	 <p>Lok Shakti @lokshaktidaily</p> <p>Video: - #Karachi Blast: Is or Not Civil War like situation in Pakistan ?</p> <p>#Karachi Blast: Is or Not Civil War like situation in Pakistan ?</p> <p>Video: - #Karachi Blast: Is or Not Civil War like situation in Pakista https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDu1ngPpRUA lokshakti.in</p> <p>5:06 PM · Oct 21, 2020 · Lokshaktidaily</p>

<p>@Dilsedesh</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/Dilsedesh/status/1318755065193058306</p>	 <p>Dilsedesh @Dilsedesh</p> <p>Heavy clashes outside Pakistan #Karachi governor house.</p> <p>Army & Sindh police jawan are now using arms against each other. 25 Pak Jawans just lost their lives following heavy clashes.</p> <p>Tanks are rolling on the streets of Karachi</p> <p>8:24 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · TweetDeck</p> <p>53 Retweets 8 Quote Tweets 198 Likes</p>
<p>@Ruthlessindia</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/Ruthlessindia/status/1318804198973075456</p>	 <p>Team Ruthless @Ruthlessindia</p> <p>So it is confirmed that it was armed clash between Pak Army & Sindh Police yesterday night, which Pak Army is now portraying as Blast.</p> <p>@drapr007 @FrontalAssault1 had already mentioned this specific location yesterday night itself</p> <p>#karachiblast #Karachi #WeStandWithSindhPolice</p> <p>Dr. APR @drapr007 · 21h</p> <p>#BREAKING : Heavy fire fight between Pak Army and Sindh Police is going on in Gulshan e Bagh area of #Karachi after Pak Army tried to take custody of a Superintendent of Sindh Police Md Aftab Anwar. #LocalSMreporting</p> <p>#Karachi_Referendum2020</p> <p>Show this thread</p> <p>11:39 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter Web App</p> <p>46 Retweets 6 Quote Tweets 143 Likes</p> <p>26 52 143</p>
<p>@drapr007</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/drapr007/status/1318624523999080449</p> <p>https://twitter.com/drapr007/status/1318642162200842240</p> <p>https://twitter.com/drapr007/status/1318625679160668160</p>	 <p>Dr. APR @drapr007</p> <p>#BREAKING : Heavy fire fight between Pak Army and Sindh Police is going on in Gulshan e Bagh area of #Karachi after Pak Army tried to take custody of a Superintendent of Sindh Police Md Aftab Anwar. #LocalSMreporting</p> <p>#Karachi_Referendum2020</p> <p>11:46 PM · Oct 20, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>582 Retweets 227 Quote Tweets 1.8K Likes</p> <p>203 809 1.8K</p>

		<p>Dr. APR @drapr007</p> <p>#BREAKING : 10 Police officers of #SindhPolice martyred during their line of duty of saving the people of #Karachi from the atrocities of Bajwa Army (Pak Army). In cross firing between Pak Army & Sindh Police, reportedly large number of Pak Army soldiers also killed. (Sources)</p> <p>The International Herald @TheIntHerald · 20h 10 Karachi police officers died in Clashes between police and Pakistan Army</p> <p>12:56 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>229 Retweets 16 Quote Tweets 705 Likes</p> <p>34 245 705</p> <p>Dr. APR @drapr007</p> <p>#BREAKING : Pak Army has surrounded house of Sindh governor. May be Sindh Governor is now in the custody of Pak Army.</p> <p>#Karachi #Karachi_Referendum2020</p> <p>11:50 PM · Oct 20, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>231 Retweets 14 Quote Tweets 862 Likes</p> <p>25 245 862</p>
	<p>https://twitter.com/FrontalAssault1/status/1318842133407797250</p> <p>https://twitter.com/FrontalAssault1/status/1318813897885995008</p>	<p>FrontalAssault @FrontalAssault1</p> <p>Pak army warned the hospitals to not treat the injured in Karachi bla\$t, as a result many people lost their lives without getting treatment.</p>  <p>0:02 10.4K views</p> <p>From RegionalTelegraph</p> <p>2:10 PM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>269 Retweets 18 Quote Tweets 732 Likes</p> <p>FrontalAssault @FrontalAssault1</p> <p>Locals in Karachi saying today's bla\$t in Karachi has been carried out by Pak Army/ISI to gain sympathy in FATF today. If true, nothing more shameless than Pak Army in this world.</p> <p>12:18 PM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>580 Retweets 21 Quote Tweets 2.6K Likes</p> <p>115 601 2.6K</p>

<p>@MeghUpda tes</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/MeghUpdates/status/1318575437392486407 https://twitter.com/MeghUpdates/status/1318807061828792322 https://twitter.com/MeghUpdates/status/1318615323445059584</p>	 <p>Megh Updates @MeghUpdates Situation Tense in Pakistan . After most of the Sindh police force including head of Force went on leave , COAS Pak Army steps in and says will deploy Army and act against any one trying to act against country</p> <p>Where is PM Imu ??</p> <p>CIVIL WAR on Cards ??</p> <p>8:30 PM · Oct 20, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>435 Retweets 14 Quote Tweets 1.7K Likes</p> <p>60 449 1.7K</p> <p>Megh Updates @MeghUpdates Pak Army has internally ordered investigation into Assets of Sindh Police officers who had applied for leave yesterday and resumed work after assurances</p> <p>Who is more Corrupt ??</p> <p>#CivilWar #Hypocrisy #BackStabbng #PakArmyVsSindhPolice #WeStandWithSindhPolice</p> <p>11:51 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>57 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 340 Likes</p> <p>12 60 340</p> <p>Megh Updates @MeghUpdates Reports from across claiming PAF jets in Air (in fear of)</p> <p>11:09 PM · Oct 20, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p> <p>195 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 1.5K Likes</p> <p>43 198 1.5K</p>
<p>@iArmySupp orter</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/iArmySupporter/status/1318639658289434624?s=20 https://twitter.com/iArmySupporter/status/1318628000510795778?s=20</p>	 <p>Pushpendra Kulshreshtha @iArmySupporter · Oct 21 BREAKING NEWS:- Civil war has broken out in Pakistan, between Pak Army and Karachi Police. Till now 10 Karachi police officers died in Clashes between police and Pakistan Army.</p> <p>#StateAboveStateRejected #GSindh</p> <p>50 223 1K</p> <p>Pushpendra Kulshreshtha @iArmySupporter · Oct 20 BREAKING NEWS:- Pak Army has surrounded house of Sindh governor. May be Sindh Governor is now in the custody of Pak Army.</p> <p>15 241 1.3K</p>

<p>@Defence_360</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/Defence_360/status/1318673682114383872?s=20</p>	
<p>@ISCRResearch</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/ISCRResearch/status/1318616105557131268?s=20</p>	
<p>@dovalraw</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/dovalraw/status/1318614261996818435?s=20</p>	
<p>@SinghPramod2784</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/SinghPramod2784/status/1318642101781897216?s=20</p>	

<p>@alam_muja id</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/alam_mujaid/status/1318642060258201600?s=20</p>	
<p>@ExposedPa kistan</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/ExposedPakistan/status/1316275371361271809 https://twitter.com/ExposedPakistan/status/1316599586329247744</p>	 

<p>Handle</p>	<p>Following</p>
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@ippatel (verified)	188K
@TimesNow (verified)	9.8M
@ZeeNewsEnglish (verified)	5.2M
@NewsMobileIndia (verified)	15.8K
@TrulyMonica (verified)	39.4K
@arunpudur (verified)	72.1K
@CNNnews (verified)	4.5M
@IndiaToday (verified)	5.3M
@OpIndia_com (verified)	465.7K
@AshishSinghNews (verified)	20.6K
@indiatvnews (verified)	1.4M
@AdityaRajKaul (verified)	279.9K
@IFENetwork24	15.8K
@RadioChinar	6,808
@TheIntlHerald	9,111
@SindhPoliceDm	282
@lokshaktidaily	434
@Dilsedesh	134.3K

@Ruthlessindia	179.9K
@drapr007	31.2K
@FrontalAssault1	55.2K
@MeghUpdates	44.3K
@iArmySupporter	154K
@Defence_360	13.4K
@ISCRResearch	19.9K
@dovalraw	75
@SinghPramod2784	7,351
@alam_mujaid	14.4K
@ExposedPakistan	2,138

Overall, we observed that the combination of verified and unverified accounts was effective in the dissemination of unverified and fake news. It was noted that while verified accounts did not spread some of the more blatant fake news, the verified accounts created the narrative of 'civil war' and 'unrest' in Pakistan to supplement the more overt misinformation being shared by other accounts. Some verified accounts belonging to individuals questioned by the mainstream media weren't covering the 'civil war' in India, implying pro-Pakistan bias on their failure to do so. 13 of the accounts that we analysed were verified and around 11 of the analysed accounts positioned themselves as news sources (some of which were verified as well). It is also significant that many of the accounts identified by DRF had a substantial Twitter following.

Use of Fake Videos and Pictures

One common trend was the usage of footage from other protests and incidents to share them as 'anti-army protests' currently taking place in Pakistan. While it is true that the military establishment is facing criticism from mainstream political parties, this disinformation does not serve genuine and grassroots movements. This

footage has been used by multiple accounts (we identified @7ru7h_1 and @TharkiLanister) as garnering the most engagement.



https://twitter.com/7ru7h_1/status/1318610355275276290



Tharki Lannister
@TharkiLanister



The beginning of the Pakistan Civil War #Karachi



From **RadioChinar**

11:21 PM · Oct 20, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

38 Retweets **3** Quote Tweets **134** Likes



<https://twitter.com/TharkiLanister/status/1318618380757204992>

This video was also used by the @TimesNow account (verified account by Twitter) in their video:



TIMES NOW
@TimesNow



Protests in Pakistan snowball: Massive protests have erupted on streets.
Slogans against Army-ISI.

Pradeep with a report.



8:49 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter Media Studio - LiveCut

111 Retweets **173** Quote Tweets **462** Likes

<https://twitter.com/TimesNow/status/1318761205012389889>

Other videos and pictures falsely attributed to protests in Pakistan against the army were also used:



Kaala_Nag 3.0 
@Kaala_Nag



[#Karachi:](#)

Today's dramatic visual from Karachi

Area: Railway Colony

Karachi Police fleeing the spot as protestors pelted stones heavily on them



11:07 PM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter for Android

@Kaala_Nag (887 Followers)

https://twitter.com/Kaala_Nag/status/1318977268220416002



@MajAshwinYadav (12 Followers)

<https://twitter.com/MajAshwinYadav/status/1318624772045955073?s=20>



@VishalBNTiwari (53 Followers)

<https://twitter.com/VishalBNTiwari/status/1318786814652477440?s=20>



@gabbarmix (1 Follower)

<https://twitter.com/gabbarmix/status/1318780789350301697?s=20>

Photoshopped Indian Flag

A photoshopped picture of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) held a rally in Karachi on October 18, 2020 was used by several accounts to insinuate that the Indian national flag was held by protestors in the crowd, implying that there is pro-India sentiment in Pakistan and a weakening government in Pakistan.



@sri9011 (18K Followers)

<https://twitter.com/sri9011/status/1318747779120861184>

Ani
@Ani_Chakravarty

Why is the Indian flag being waved in the protest against Pakistani Army? Yeh kya ho raha hai boss!!

#Karachi



1:10 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter Web App

58 Retweets 10 Quote Tweets 319 Likes

@Ani_Chakravarty (49 followers)

https://twitter.com/Ani_Chakravarty/status/1318645873119617025

YATI SHARMA
@yati_sharma18

#CIVILWARINPAK

Why is the Indian flag being waved in the protest against Pakistani Army? Yeh kya ho raha hai boss!!

RT If u also see indian flag 🇮🇳



9:11 AM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter for Android


53 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 169 Likes

@yati_sharma18 (11.2K Followers)

https://twitter.com/yati_sharma18/status/1318766823991517184

 **Zoya** 
@Zoya_nafidi

Picture of The Day !!

 Indian flag raised in PDM Karachi Jalsa.



10:21 AM · Oct 20, 2020 · Twitter for Android

54 Retweets 4 Quote Tweets 165 Likes

@Zoya_nafidi (3,859 Followers)

https://twitter.com/Zoya_nafidi/status/1318422115725438976



Shivam Dubey @iShivamDubey · Oct 21

Why is the Indian flag being waved in the protest against Pakistani Army?
Yeh kya ho raha hai boss!!

#Karachi



7

21

202



@iShivamDubey (32.5K Followers)

<https://twitter.com/iShivamDubey/status/1318742085332185088?s=20>



@ZainIndian1971 (642 Followers)

<https://twitter.com/ZainIndian1971/status/1318770328353452034?s=20>

The veracity of this picture has been debunked by 'Soch Fact Checker' which found that the Indian flag had been doctored into the crowd or falsely attributing the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party flag as the Indian flag.⁴

Hashtags

Hashtags such as #FATFBlacklistPakistan, #EndGamePakistan, #ImranUnderSeige and #Sindhudesh were used by several accounts spreading misinformation.



@kktotlani (15K Followers)

<https://twitter.com/kktotlani/status/1318961306842484736>

⁴ Zainab Husain, 'Indian flag not raised at PDM rally,' Soch, October 21, 2020, <https://www.sochfactcheck.com/indian-flag-not-raised-at-pdm-rally/>.



Republic
@republic

The Debate with Arnab Goswami on [#EndgamePakistan](#) is now LIVE. Tune in to watch and share your views using the hashtag - republicworld.com/livetv.html



10:09 PM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter Media Studio

45 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 176 Likes



6



48



176



@republic (verified, 2.1M Followers)

<https://twitter.com/republic/status/1318962649690828803>



Palki Aggarwal
@palki_aggarwal

Another low in [#PakistanArmy](#)'s sinister designs, murdered it's own civilians & policemen to gain sympathy of the world ahead of [#FATF](#) meeting.

Pak Army/ISI propagated a blast in [#Karachi](#) earlier today, dozens of people killed & many injured.

[#FATFBlacklistPakistan](#)

[@TheSatishDua](#)



4:17 PM · Oct 21, 2020 · Twitter for Android

@palki_aggarwal (245 Followers)

https://twitter.com/palki_aggarwal/status/1318874026421284864



@FrontalAssault1 (55.2K Followers)

<https://twitter.com/FrontalAssault1/status/1318769683802324992>

Other Tactics

Interestingly, some accounts which regularly Tweet in Hindi switched to English when tweeting about Pakistan. It can be speculated that the language switch was a deliberate tactic to address the international community.



@iArmySupporter (154K Followers)

Efforts were also made to appear as if the information was coming from within Pakistan. This was seen through a fake account impersonating the Sindh police (Original account: <https://twitter.com/sindhpolicedmc>, @sindhpolicedmc).



Response from Pakistan

In Pakistan this disinformation campaign was met with humour, fact-checking and reporting from both mainstream⁵ and social media. Major news outlets covered the disinformation campaign and highlighting the use of humour to respond to the more blatant fake news tweets on social media. Twitter users used memes⁶ and hashtags such as #CivilWarInPakistan, #IndianMedia and #CivilWarInKarachi to respond to the disinformation.

It also needs to be pointed out that disinformation campaigns such as these are not new for both countries. In the past a “global network of pro-Indian fake websites and think-tanks is aimed at influencing decision-making in Europe” was uncovered

⁵ “Indian media ridiculed widely for outlandish stories about 'civil war' in Karachi”, Geo News, , October 21, 2020, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/314393-twitterati-slam-indian-media-for-spreading-fake-news-on-karachi-incident>.

⁶ “Zara Hat Kay”, Dawn News, October 21, 2020, https://twitter.com/ZaraHatKay_Dawn/status/1319003040691769345.

by EU Disinfo Lab, a Brussels-based NGO.⁷ The network focused on anti-Pakistan content and lobbying.

More recently, the Stanford Internet Observatory reported on a “network of Pakistan-based Facebook and Instagram accounts suspended for coordinated inauthentic behavior reveals mass reporting to silence critics of Islam and Pakistan.”⁸

Acknowledgements

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About DRF

The Digital Rights Foundation (DRF) is a non-governmental organization, established in 2012, working on the intersection of human rights with technology, with a particular focus on freedom of expression, right to privacy and protections against gender-based violence in online spaces.

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⁷ Flora Carmichael and Abid Hussain, “Pro-Indian ‘fake websites targeted decision makers in Europe’”, BBC World Service, December 16, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-50749764>.

⁸ “Reporting for Duty,” Stanford Internet Observatory, September 1, 2020, <https://cyber.fsi.stanford.edu/io/news/reporting-duty>.