

My Heart Belongs to Kashmir: An Analysis of a Pro-Indian Army Covert Influence Operation on Twitter

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September 21, 2022



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1 Introduction

On August 24, 2022, Twitter shared 15 datasets of information operations it identified and removed from the platform with researchers in the [Twitter Moderation Research Consortium](#) for independent analysis. One of these datasets included 1,198 accounts that tweeted about India and Pakistan. Twitter suspended the network for violating their [Platform Manipulation and Spam Policy](#), and said that the presumptive country of origin was India. Our report builds on a [report](#) on this same network by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.¹

The network tweeted primarily in English, but also in Hindi and Urdu. Accounts claimed to be proud Kashmiris and relatives of Indian soldiers. Tweets praised the Indian Army's military successes and provision of services in India-administered Kashmir and criticized the militaries of China and Pakistan. Two accounts existed to target specific individuals who were perceived as enemies of the Indian government.

Twitter is not publicly attributing this network to any actor, and the open source evidence did not allow us to make any independent attribution. We want to highlight, however, some noteworthy articles in the Indian press. These articles show that Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have previously temporarily suspended the official accounts for the Chinar Corps. The Chinar Corps is a branch of the Indian army that [operates in Kashmir](#).

On June 7, 2019, Asian News International [tweeted](#) that Twitter had suspended the official Chinar Corps account the previous day, then reinstated it. This was also reported in [The Print](#).

In February 2022, Indian media outlets, including [The India Express](#), [English Jagram](#), and [New Indian Express](#) reported that the Facebook and Instagram accounts for the Chinar Corps were suspended on January 28, 2022, for “coordinated inauthentic behavior.” The English Jagram article says the source of this information was “Army officials.”

These articles note that the Chinar Corps Instagram account was restored on February 9, 2022. The Chinar Corps Facebook Page appears to have been restored on either the same day or the following day. Consistent with these news articles, we note that the Chinar Corps Facebook Page and Instagram account did not post between January 28, 2022 and February 9, 2022. The Chinar Corps Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts are all currently live.

We do **not** have sufficient evidence to link this suspended Twitter network to the Chinar Corps. We note, however, a few points:

- The content of the Twitter network is consistent with the Chinar Corps' objectives, praising the work of the Indian Army in India-occupied Kashmir.
- The official Chinar Corps Twitter account, @ChinarcorpsIA, is the seventh most mentioned or retweeted account in the network.

1. The Stanford Internet Observatory, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, and Graphika received advance access to this dataset on July 14, 2022.

- A handful of the Twitter account bios linked to Facebook or Instagram accounts. Some of these Meta accounts are live, others are down.

CHRONOLOGY

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| June 6, 2019 | • | Twitter suspends Chinar Corps account |
| June 7, 2019 | • | Twitter reinstates Chinar Corps account |
| January 28, 2022 | • | Facebook Page and Instagram account for Chinar Corps suspended |
| January 31, 2022 | • | Oldest visible Chinar Corps tweet, despite account created in 2017 |
| February 9 and/or 10, 2022 | • | Facebook Page and Instagram account for Chinar Corps reinstated |
| March 29, 2022 | • | Last visible tweet from Twitter takedown |

2 Network Overview

Figure 1 shows the network's tweet frequency over time. The network was most active in 2021. Twitter appears to have suspended at least part of the network in March 2022.

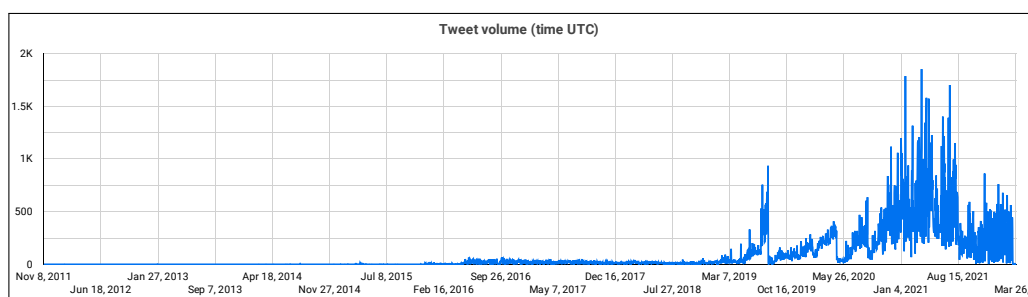


Figure 1: Tweet frequency over time in the suspended network.

Figure 2 on the next page shows the most commonly used hashtags. Popular hashtags were related to Kashmir and the Indian and Pakistani militaries. Table 1 on the following page shows the most commonly shared domains.

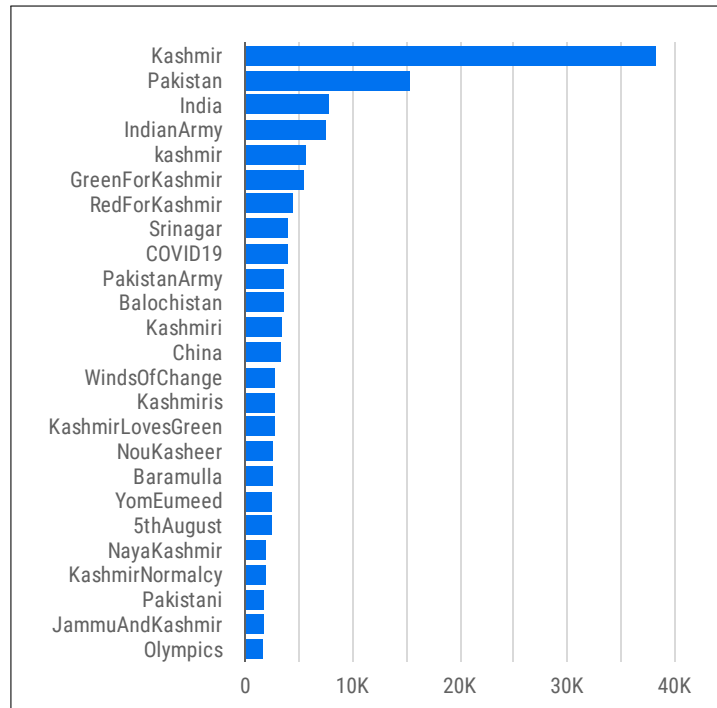


Figure 2: Most frequently used hashtags in the suspended network.

| Domain | Count |
|--------------------|-------|
| youtube.com | 2,884 |
| facebook.com | 1,267 |
| greaterkashmir.com | 1,173 |
| indiatimes.com | 941 |
| defencenews.in | 513 |
| aninews.in | 484 |
| dailyexcelsior.com | 484 |
| hindustantimes.com | 471 |
| risingkashmir.com | 462 |

Table 1: Top domains shared by the network.

3 Tactics

Many of the accounts in the network claimed to be Indians, often Kashmiris, and frequently said they were located in Kashmir (see, for example, Figure 3). One bio said “Proud Indian and Proud Kashmiri. My Heart belongs to Kashmir, Soul to India and Life to Humanity.” It was common for account bios to say that they were relatives of Indian army soldiers; one, for example said, “My father served in the Indian Army was martyred.” Accounts claimed to be freelance reporters or volunteers in Kashmir; one said they were an aspiring YouTuber. Many claimed to be students. One of the suspended accounts was a Kashmiri digital marketing firm.



Figure 3: A suspended profile claiming to be a proud Kashmiri. The profile photo is also used by a user with a different name on the freelancing website Fiverr.

Accounts frequently used profile photos taken from elsewhere on the internet. For example, Figure 4 shows a profile photo that is a Getty stock image.

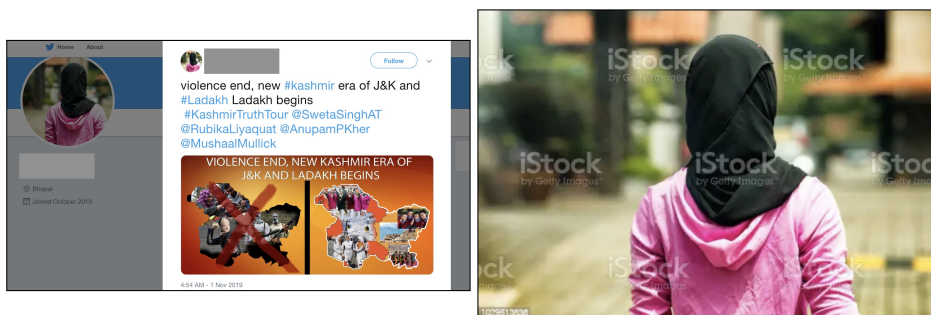


Figure 4: Left: An archived tweet from a suspended account. Right: The **Getty stock image** that the suspended account used as a profile photo.

Many of the bios had a nonsensical series of characters, a single word, or follow-back language (see Figure 5 on the next page). Account bios frequently linked to Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube accounts, some of which are live and some suspended.

The suspended network’s tweets tagged both authentic and suspended accounts, including regional journalists, politicians from the Balochistan province in Pakistan, and Indian politicians.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|------|
| 100% FOLLOW back | Cutie | Zzzz |
| I love my India 100% follow back | Dear | Bbbb |
| 100 %Follow back | Lover | Mmmm |
| | Adaayein | Kkkk |
| | Willing | Llll |
| | Ture | Oooo |
| | Real | Pppp |
| | Rare | Uuuu |
| | Beautiful | Oooo |
| | Student | Tttt |
| | Rurer | Qqqq |
| | Kiddy | |
| | Beautiful | |
| | Studies | |
| | Beautiful👉 | |
| | Mature | |

Figure 5: Bios from some of the suspended accounts.

Tweets tagging journalists aimed either to bring events to the attention of reporters, or to bring the reporter to the attention of followers—often in an apparent attempt to target the reporter for what was framed as anti-India content.

There were two accounts in the network that existed to target reporters, activists, and politicians in this way. The accounts had similar usernames and tweets: @KashmirTraitors (created in July 2020, with a bio that said “Busting fake news, bringing you the real truth of Kashmir”), and @KashmirTraitor1 (created in January 2022, with a bio that said “Exposing the traitors who call them #Kashmiri but are working towards destroying #Kashmiriyat....!!!!”), see Figure 6 on the following page). The @KashmirTraitors bio linked to a YouTube channel, Traitors of Kashmir, created in 2014. The Twitter accounts and YouTube channel targeted specific individuals, focusing on what the account deemed “anti-India” journalists, calling reporters “#whitecollarterrorist,” for example; saying that they were working to corrupt the minds of Kashmiris; and accusing them of taking money from Pakistan. The accounts also targeted activists. One @KashmirTraitor1 thread, for example, targeted the **activist and author Pieter Friedrich** (see Figure 7 on page 8).

These two Kashmir Traitor accounts also targeted the Pakistani government. One @KashmirTraitors tweet said:

“#ISPR has raised an #astounding network of 4000-strong highly qualified #Information Warfare specialists during the past decade through a carefully crafted internship program that is directly run by #ISI”

ISPR stands for Inter-Services Public Relations, the Pakistani military’s media arm. ISI stands for Inter-Services Intelligence, a Pakistani intelligence agency. The tweet was accompanied by the image shown in Figure 8 on page 8.

Almost 400 tweets from @KashmirTraitors received at least 500 likes. Its most popular tweet targeted journalist Fahad Shah, who has been **imprisoned since March 2022**. The tweet, from January 17, 2021, said:



Figure 6: The suspended @KashmirTraitor1 account.

“#FahadShah unveiled #thread (1/n) Fahad is the founder and editor of the #Kashmir Walla magazine and claims himself an freelance journalist on the other hand rigorously publishes content on anti-#India sentiments. Mr #Fahad how can you call yourself independent journalist?”

The tweet got 2,440 likes. In calling out particular individuals, @KashmirTraitors would sometimes tag the official Chinar Corps account, @ChinarcorpsIA, to draw their attention to a thread.

We encourage reporters and researchers with expertise in India and Pakistan to further investigate @KashmirTraitor1. Many tweets from this account have been archived on archive.org.

The most retweeted or mentioned account in the network was @NewsComWorld, which is associated with newscomworld.com. Research suggests **inauthentic accounts** have amplified articles from this domain, and that the domain shares anti-Pakistan and anti-China content, along with false news stories.

Dozens of accounts in the network mentioned or retweeted Kanwal Jeet Singh Dhillon, or @Tiny_Dhillon, a former Chinar Corps commander. He was mentioned or retweeted more than 1,000 times. The official Chinar Corps account,



Figure 7: Tweets from January 13, 2022, targeting Pieter Friedrich.



Figure 8: An image tweeted in December 2020 by @KashmirTraitors.



Figure 9: An image tweeted on January 20, 2021 by @KashmirTraitors.

@ChinarcorpsIA, was mentioned or retweeted almost 4,000 times. One tweet, for example, said:

“Indian Army - Nation First! The best video on the Social Media showing the bond shared by the soldiers and countrymen in the valley! #Kashmir #HatsOff #IndianArmy”

The tweet tagged @Tiny_Dhillon and @ChinarcorpsIA, among others. It received 687 likes.

The second most retweeted or mentioned account was a leader of the Baloch Republican Party, a separatist group in Pakistan. Other retweeted or mentioned accounts included Indian army veterans and active commanders, official Indian Army accounts, and @RadioChinar (a Kashmir news outlet).

4 Narratives

4.1 Pro-Indian Army

The network praised the Indian Army, particularly for their military successes and provision of humanitarian services in India-administered Kashmir (see Figure 10 on the next page). One tweet on June 3, 2020, noted that a bomb disposal squad had detonated a vehicle with explosives in Kashmir. The tweet claimed the vehicle was linked to Mohammad Ismail Alvi, a **Pakistani militant** who has since been killed. Tweets highlighted Indian army successes against Pakistan; for example, on June 12, 2020, one tweet said:

“IndianArmy on Thursday destroyed at least 10 Pakistani army posts along the Line of Control in Pakistan occupied Kashmir [...]”

Other tweets were more generic, simply saying:

“I have full faith in the #IndianArmy. People stay united and stand with the Army!”

Many tweets highlighted non-military services provided by the Indian Army (see Figure 11). Tweets said the Indian Army was installing security lights in parts of Kashmir and providing medical aid.

Many tweets used generic language to hope for peace in Kashmir. One June 8, 2020, tweet said:

“[...] inshAllah soon peace will return to #Kashmir after 30 years.
Indian goverment did great job for bring back peace in Kashmir valley
[...]”

Tweets expressed concern for both Muslim and Hindu residents of Kashmir.

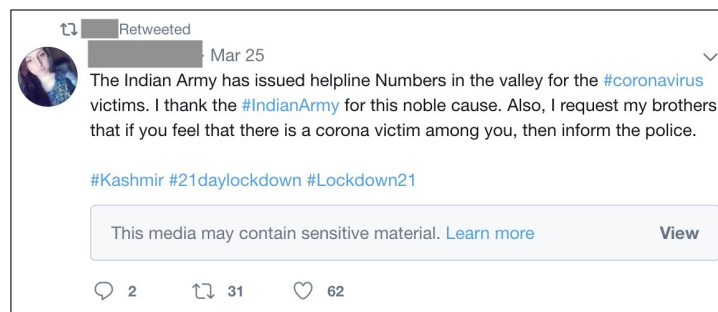


Figure 10: A 2020 tweet highlighting Indian Army services.



Figure 11: An image shared with a tweet on July 5, 2020. The tweet said, “This is what #IndianArmy is doing in #Kashmir from decades [...]”

4.2 Anti-Pakistan

Tweets took a number of approaches to criticizing Pakistan. They highlighted university student protests in Balochistan, a Pakistani province with a number of **separatist groups**. One tweet said, “Students protesting in Islamabad against the inaccessibility of internet in #Balochistan.” The image accompanying this text is in Figure 12. Accounts accused Pakistan of spreading unfounded claims of Indian army atrocities, and they accused Pakistani soldiers of committing human rights abuses and protecting terrorists. Tweets claimed Pakistan was not safe for Hindus nor Muslims, and that Pakistan abandoned Pakistani citizens in China when the COVID-19 pandemic began. Tweets also criticized women’s rights in Pakistan. One suspended account shared a tweet that said, “Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has come under attack after he blamed women’s clothing for the rise in rape and sexual assault.”

Tweets supported separatists in Balochistan. One January 30, 2020, tweet said:

“I request all my Dear Indians to support Baloochistan and Pashtuns becoz they Love India from starting and never wanted to be with Pakistan. Don’t just speak but show it in your actions – your Love for Balochistan and Pashtunistan. #freebalochistan [...]”



Figure 12: An image accompanying a June 23, 2020, tweet about a student protest in Pakistan.

4.3 Anti-China

A common narrative in the network was that India’s military dominates China’s military. Indian soldiers are courageous, while Chinese soldiers easily surrender. Indian soldiers were referred to as “bravehearts,” and soldiers killed in clashes with China were called heroes and martyrs. Any failed attacks on India’s part were due to unethical Chinese strategies, according to the network. The hashtag #IndiaChinaFaceOff was used. One July 2020 tweet said:

“India has slain more than 100 Chinese soldiers in Galwan Valley: Jianli Yang, a former Chinese military official and son of a leader in China When Pakistan heard this news 😬”

Hashtags like #BoycottMadeInChina, #BoycottChineseProducts, and #BoycottChina appeared in the network (see Figure 13). Tweets encouraged Indians to buy Indian products and delete Chinese apps like TikTok and WeChat. Many tweets blamed China for the emergence of COVID-19, referring to the virus as the China virus. Tweets criticized China for hiding the pandemic from the rest of the world, while simultaneously praising the Indian government’s vaccination campaigns, sanitation materials, and provision of personal protective equipment. For example, an April 2020 tweet said:

“[...] SEE THE DiFFERENCE [...] China gave #COVID-19 to world. India gave #Hydroxychloroquine tablets to the world. Two oldest civilizations with different results... Really proud of #India #China #ChinaMustExplain #StaySafeStayHelpful #COVID-_19 #IndiaFightsCorona”



Figure 13: An image shared with a tweet on June 29, 2020. The tweet said “Current situation in India [...] #BoycottChina [...]”

The network was also harshly critical of the human rights situation in China. Tweets called out the treatment of Uyghurs, the forced conversion of Muslims, and the destruction of mosques and religious artifacts. A July 2020 tweet said:

“Major protest outside Chinese Consulate in Vancouver, Canada by the Indian diaspora. Canadian Tibetan Community and Vancouver Uyghurs also participated in the protest rally. ‘China Against Democracy’, ‘Boycott China’ ‘Free Michael Spavor’ and ‘Back Off China’ posters visible.”

The network unsurprisingly condoned the positive relations between China and Pakistan. Tweets scorned Pakistan for turning a blind eye to Chinese government atrocities. They framed Pakistan as desperate for the financial gains a partnership with China could bring and willing to abandon moral obligations toward Muslims

in exchange for power. A July 2020 tweet said:

“Qurans are being burnt. Mosques are being shut down. Muslims are forcefully sent to concentration camps. Pakistan is silent. Uighur Muslim’s genocide in China After seeing the truth of China, Pakistan remains friends? #Uighurmuslims #BoycottChina #ChinaVsWorld #COVID #India”

Continuing the narrative of China as an oppressive, malicious regime, tweets in the network expressed support for Taiwan and Hong Kong’s push for independence from China. In these tweets, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and India fight for democracy, while China stands for communism and global tyranny.

5 Conclusion

This suspended network promoted the activities of the Indian Army, particularly in Kashmir, and criticized Pakistan and China. Two accounts in particular, @KashmirTraitors and @KashmirTraitor1, stood out for targeting individuals deemed anti-India. While we were not able to determine who ran these suspended Twitter accounts, we note that official Chinar Corps Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts were temporarily suspended in the past, and Indian Army officials told reporters that the stated reason for the Facebook and Instagram suspensions was Meta’s policy on coordinated inauthentic behavior. The content of the Twitter network discussed in this report was consistent with the objectives of the Chinar Corps.

This suspended network is large and political. Our report only scratches the surface. We encourage researchers—particularly those who are members of the new Twitter Moderation Research Consortium—to dig further into this network. We also encourage researchers and reporters with expertise in India and Pakistan to further study @KashmirTraitors and @KashmirTraitor1; the latter has been [heavily archived](#) on archive.org.

The Stanford Internet Observatory is a cross-disciplinary program of research, teaching and policy engagement for the study of abuse in current information technologies, with a focus on social media. The Stanford Internet Observatory was founded in 2019 to research the misuse of the internet to cause harm, formulate technical and policy responses, and teach the next generation how to avoid the mistakes of the past.

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