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Information Manipulation by Troll Groups on Taiwan Presidential Election

2023/11/23 ~ 2023/11/30

AI Labs.tw
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Quantity of analyzed data

Events	Media volume	Troll accounts	Community volume	Troll volumes (Proportion)
705	5,480	10,497	355,560	16,751(4.71%)

Insights on manipulation strategies

· This week, following the collapse of the KMT-TPP alliance, there was a noticeable surge in mutual criticisms between the KMT and TPP across various platforms, with the attack intensity recorded as follows: Facebook at 12.9%, YouTube at 23.7%, PTT at 26.7%, and TikTok at 26.7%. Notably, on YouTube, criticisms were more heavily directed at the KMT than TPP, whereas on other platforms, Ko Wen-je was the primary target.

· An analysis of the two most active Facebook troll groups, 61009 and 61019, revealed similar patterns in their active periods and targets of criticism. Both troll groups suddenly became active on September 6th, the day candidate Terry Gou announced his running for election. They are active in similar stories and predominantly critiqued the KMT, the DPP, and Ko Wen-je, accounting for an average of 15% of their content, with relatively lesser focus on Terry Gou.

· Throughout this week, Tsai Ing-wen's Facebook fan page became a hotspot for a large number of coordinated comments. Some of these comments echoed the China state-affiliated media's narrative, suggesting that the DPP's ascension to power could escalate military tensions and conflict risks. Simultaneously, narratives favoring the KMT appeared on PTT, YouTube, and TikTok, which subsequently found resonance in the narratives pushed by Chinese state-affiliated media.

Techniques used by troll groups

· Taiwan AI Labs observed troll group activities on Facebook, YouTube, PTT, and TikTok, and attempted to categorize these behaviors using the DISARM framework[1]. These activities are divided into two phases: Prepare and Execute. In the Prepare phase, on platforms like Facebook, PTT, and TikTok, we speculate that the operators of troll groups leverage existing narratives (T0003 Leverage Existing Narratives). Across all four platforms, we noticed troll groups engaging in commenting or replying to posts and videos (T0116 Comment or Reply on Content), as well as amplifying and manipulating numerous narratives (T0049.001 Trolls Amplify and Manipulate). However, the activities on PTT and Facebook were more severe, with troll groups flooding these spaces with excessive comments, attempting to overwhelm the online discussion (T0049 Flooding the Information Space). The detailed activities are organized in the table below.

Uses techniques:

DISARM FOUNDATION

· T0003 Leverage Existing Narratives
· T0049 Flooding the Information Space
· T0049.001 Trolls amplify and manipulate
· T0116 Comment or Reply on Content

1. DISARM Disinformation Analysis and Risk Management is an open-source framework designed for describing and understanding the behavior parts of FIMI/disinformation. It sets out best practices for fighting disinformation through sharing data & analysis, and can inform effective action. The Framework has been developed, drawing on global cybersecurity best practices.

Phase	Prepare	Execute		
Tactic	T0003 Leverage Existing Narratives	T0049 Flooding the Information Space	T0049.001 Trolls amplify and manipulate	T0116 Comment or Reply on Content
Facebook	○	○	◎	◎
Youtube			○	◎
PTT	○	◎	◎	◎
Tiktok	○		○	◎

○ indicates observed manipulative behaviors that align with this Tactic.
◎ signifies observed manipulative behaviors that very closely match this Tactic.

Cross-platform manipulation Analysis
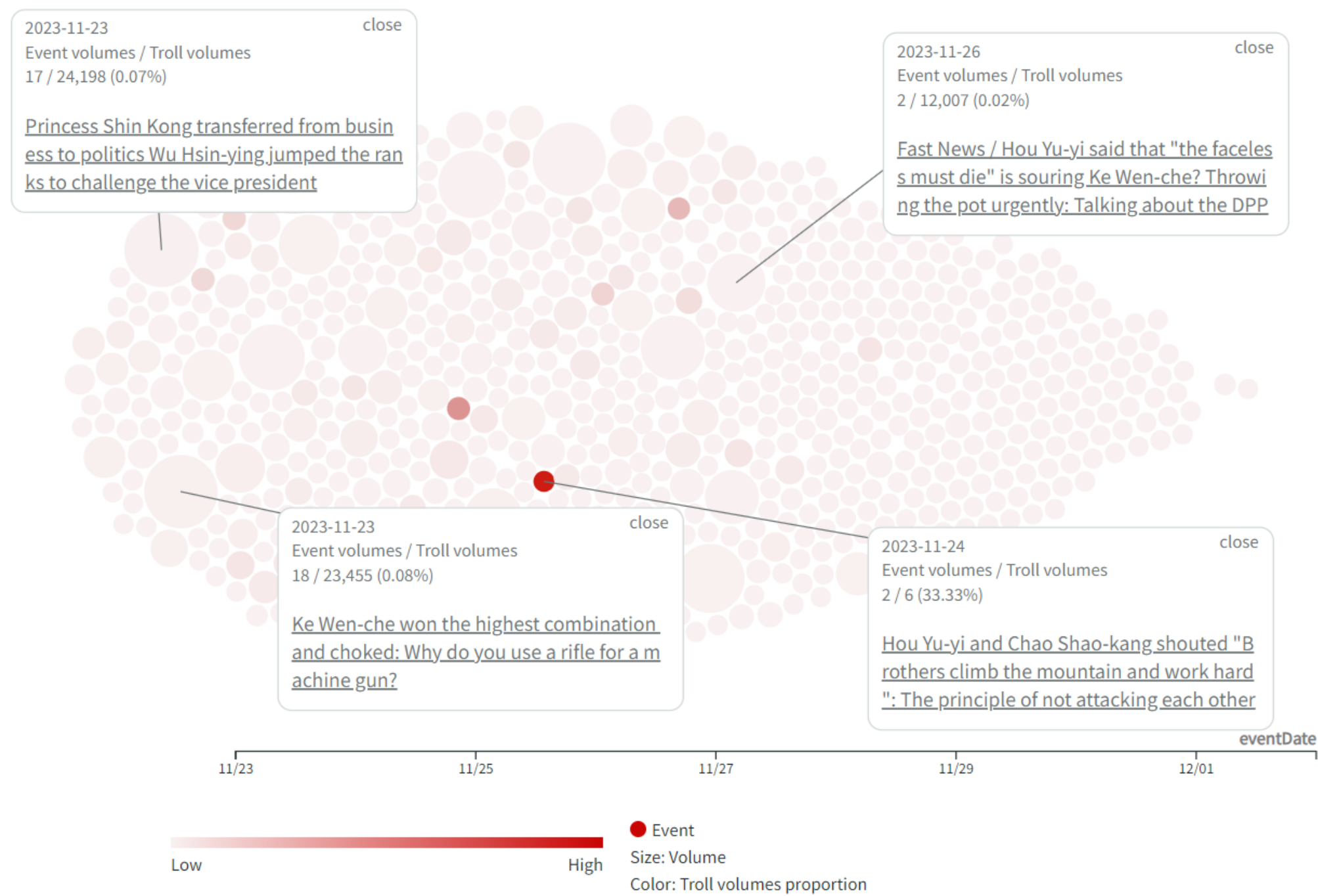
Facebook

On Facebook, troll groups primarily targeted the DPP (8.1%), Ko Wen-je (7.2%), and the KMT (5.1%). Attacks on the DPP were mostly found under Tsai Ing-wen's Facebook page, focusing on policies like ractopamine-treated pork and the nuclear-free homeland, with some comments hyping up fears of war under slogans like "Vote for the DPP, and the youth will go to the battlefield." Criticisms of Ko Wen-je, mainly under his Facebook page, centered on his perceived betrayal and lack of credibility during the Blue-White alliance talks, and his decision to choose Cynthia Wu as his deputy. Attacks on the KMT criticized their policies on service trade agreements and allowing Chinese labor in Taiwan, and accused the KMT of scheming against Ko Wen-je during the Blue-White alliance.

2023-11-23   close
Event volumes / Troll volumes
384 / 36,411 (1.05%)

Princess Shin Kong transferred from business to politics Wu Hsin-ying jumped the ranks to challenge the vice president

2023-11-25   close
Event volumes / Troll volumes
213 / 1,792 (11.89%)

The path of choosing different people is really different! Tsai Ing-wen: TSMC will not consider Taoyuan after the change of mayor

2023-11-30   close
Event volumes / Troll volumes
177 / 52,406 (0.34%)

Wu Hsin-ying's role as deputy was questioned to move closer to the consortium! Huang Shan-shan: Since February, the People's Party has been making small donations

2023-11-25   close
Event volumes / Troll volumes
490 / 4,041 (12.13%)

"The president and vice president are the face of the country and cannot be trusted!" Tsai Ing-wen Ying-wen is strong and Lai Xiaopei

2023-11-28   close
Event volumes / Troll volumes
240 / 2,073 (11.58%)

Lai Ching-te questioned the country and scolded Tsai Ing-wen Ying-wen: He really cares about protecting this country

eventDate

11/23   11/25   11/27   11/29   12/01

● Event
Size: Volume
Color: Troll volumes proportion

Low   High

Entity	Troll volume %	Summary of Narratives
DPP	8.1%	· Accusing the DPP of corruption and fraud, and criticizing its policies on a nuclear-free homeland and the importation of ractopamine-treated pork. · Claiming that if the DPP comes to power, the youth will be sent to war.
Ko Wen-je	7.2%	· Criticizing Ko Wen-je for choosing Cynthia Wu as his deputy. · Attacking Ko Wen-je for reneging on his promises and lacking credibility during the Blue-White alliance negotiations.
KMT	5.7%	· Criticizing the KMT for their policies on opening cross-strait service trade and allowing Chinese laborers into Taiwan. · Alleging that the KMT plotted against Ko Wen-je in the Blue-White alliance incident.

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Youtube

On YouTube, troll groups predominantly attacked the KMT (13.5%) and Ko Wen-je (10.2%). The narratives against the KMT claimed that they were betrayed by Ko Wen-je and criticized their poor governance, suggesting Hou You-yi should be vice president candidate. The attacks on Ko Wen-je focused on his alleged dishonesty and criticized his appointment of Cynthia Wu as his deputy as collusion with business conglomerates. These activities were mainly observed on Dennis Peng's channel, "True Voice of Taiwan."
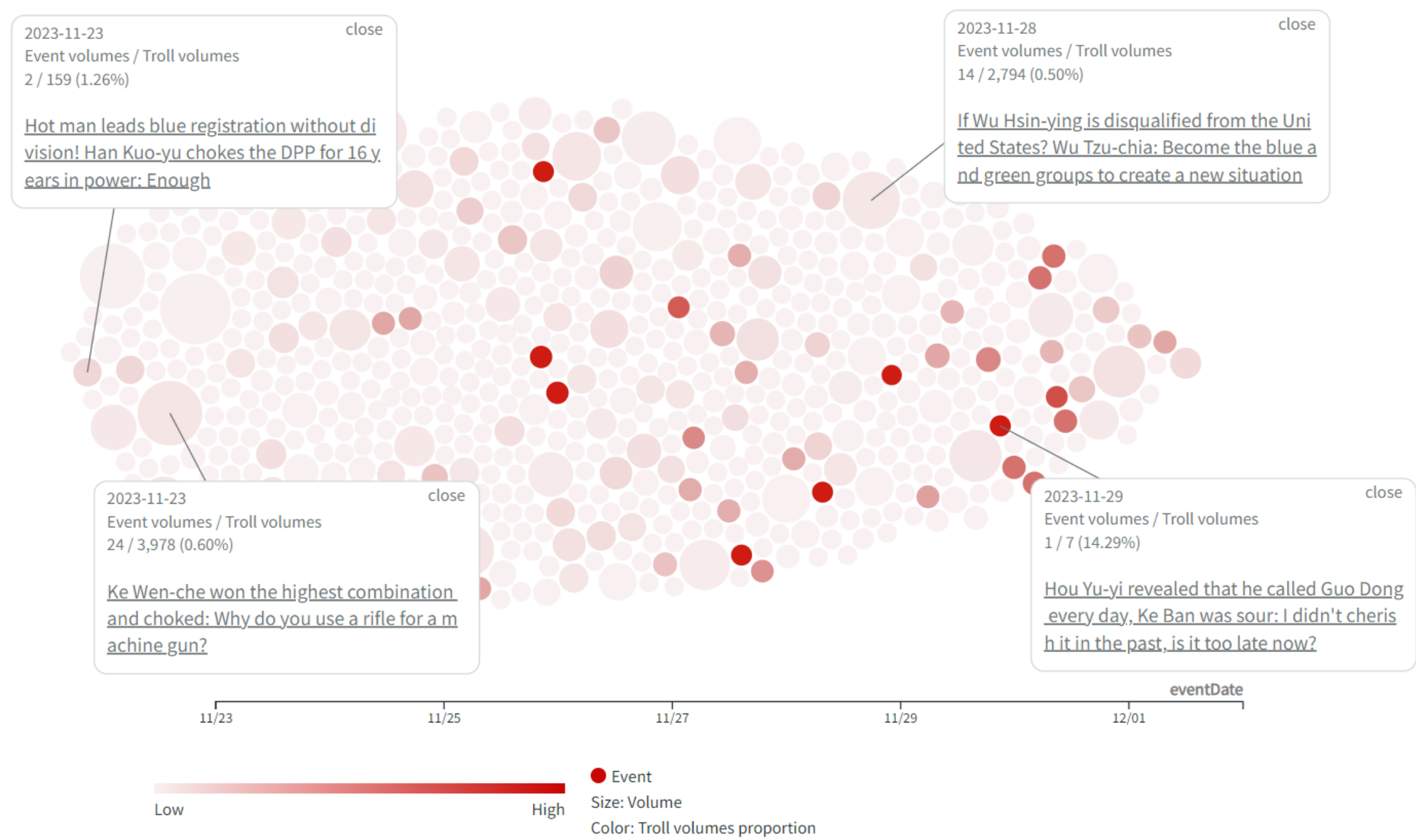

2023-11-23   close
Event volumes / Troll volumes
17 / 24,198 (0.07%)

Princess Shin Kong transferred from business to politics Wu Hsin-ying jumped the ranks to challenge the vice president

2023-11-26   close
Event volumes / Troll volumes
2 / 12,007 (0.02%)

Fast News / Hou Yu-yi said that "the faceless must die" is souring Ke Wen-che? Throwing the pot urgently: Talking about the DPP

2023-11-23   close
Event volumes / Troll volumes
18 / 23,455 (0.08%)

Ke Wen-che won the highest combination and choked: Why do you use a rifle for a machine gun?

2023-11-24   close
Event volumes / Troll volumes
2 / 6 (33.33%)

Hou Yu-yi and Chao Shao-kang shouted "Brothers climb the mountain and work hard": The principle of not attacking each other

eventDate

11/23   11/25   11/27   11/29   12/01

Low   High

● Event
Size: Volume
Color: Troll volumes proportion

Entity	Troll volume %	Summary of Narratives
KMT —	13.5%	· Claiming that the KMT was betrayed by Ko Wen-je. · Criticizes the KMT for being in bad governance and their candidate should be vice-president.
Ko Wen-je —	10.2%	· Attacking Ko Wen-je for lying and appointing Cynthia Wu as his vice-president candidate is colluding with the consortium.

* During the observation period, no operations targeting the DPP were detected.
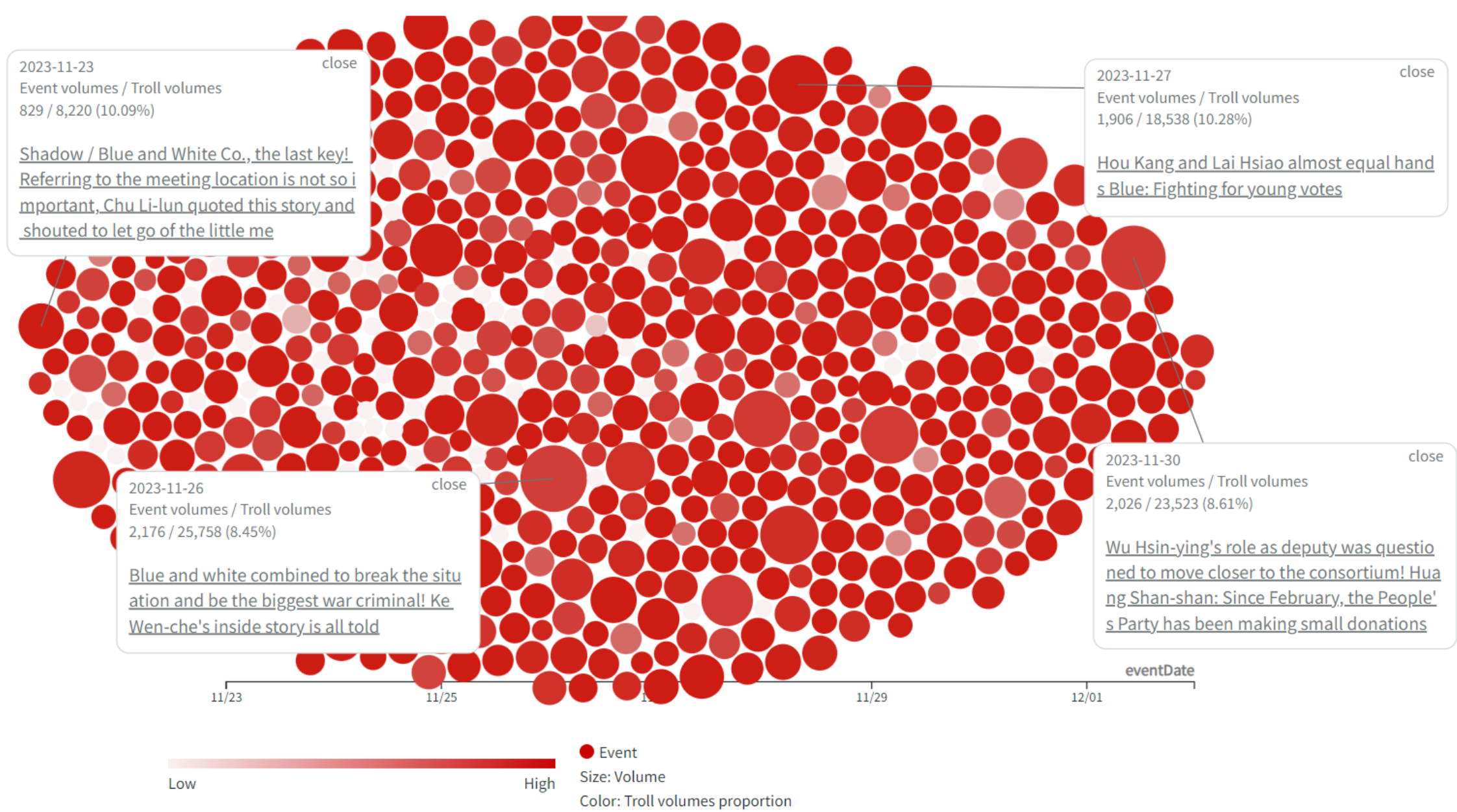
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Tiktok

On TikTok, the most significant volume of troll groups' activities was directed against Ko Wen-je (17.8%), but AI Labs also observed a substantial amount of supportive comments for him (15.6%). This was followed by attacks on the DPP (8.9%) and the KMT (8.9%). The operations targeting Ko Wen-je criticized his lack of credibility and opportunism during the Blue-White alliance and accused him of "turning the page" when faced with unfavorable situations. Supportive comments for Ko Wen-je expressed disgust with both the KMT and DPP, hoping that voting for Ko would change Taiwan. Criticisms of the DPP labeled them as corrupt and hypocritical, urging to vote them out, while attacks on the KMT called them incompetent and accused them of plotting against Ko Wen-je.

2023-11-23
Event volumes / Troll volumes
2 / 159 (1.26%)

Hot man leads blue registration without division! Han Kuo-yu chokes the DPP for 16 years in power: Enough

close

2023-11-28
Event volumes / Troll volumes
14 / 2,794 (0.50%)

If Wu Hsin-ying is disqualified from the United States? Wu Tzu-chia: Become the blue and green groups to create a new situation

close

2023-11-23
Event volumes / Troll volumes
24 / 3,978 (0.60%)

Ke Wen-che won the highest combination and choked: Why do you use a rifle for a machine gun?

close

2023-11-29
Event volumes / Troll volumes
1 / 7 (14.29%)

Hou Yu-yi revealed that he called Guo Dong every day, Ke Ban was sour: I didn't cherish it in the past, is it too late now?

close

eventDate

11/23   11/25   11/27   11/29   12/01

Low — High   ● Event
Size: Volume
Color: Troll volumes proportion

Entity	Troll volume %	Summary of Narratives
Ko Wen-je —	17.8%	· Attacking Ko Wen-je as having no credibility, being ignorant of current affairs, and "turning the page" when encountering unfavorable things.
Ko Wen-je +	15.6%	· Hating KMT and DPP and hoping that voting for Ko Wen-je can change Taiwan.
DPP —	8.9%	· Attacking DPP's double standards of corruption and hoping the DPP loses the election.
KMT —	8.9%	· Attacked the KMT's incompetence and criticized the KMT for plotting against Ko Wen-je.

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PTT

On PTT, troll groups mainly targeted Ko Wen-je (14.6%), the KMT (12.1%), and the DPP (9.1%). Attacks on Ko Wen-je claimed he was untrustworthy and exposed during the Blue-White alliance, criticizing his appointment of Cynthia Wu as a move towards business interests. Criticisms of the KMT focused on their inconsistent statements during the Blue-White alliance, accusing them of just wanting votes and believing that Eric Chu would lead the KMT to disaster. They were also criticized for their hasty decision to collaborate with Ko Wen-je. The voices against the DPP accused them of manipulating polls leading to distortion and blamed their poor governance. However, the KMT's reluctance to work with Ko Wen-je, which led to the DPP's rise to power, was seen as complicity with the DPP.

2023-11-23
Event volumes / Troll volumes
829 / 8,220 (10.09%)

Shadow / Blue and White Co., the last key! Referring to the meeting location is not so important, Chu Li-lun quoted this story and shouted to let go of the little me

2023-11-27
Event volumes / Troll volumes
1,906 / 18,538 (10.28%)

Hou Kang and Lai Hsiao almost equal hands Blue: Fighting for young votes

2023-11-26
Event volumes / Troll volumes
2,176 / 25,758 (8.45%)

Blue and white combined to break the situation and be the biggest war criminal! Ke Wen-che's inside story is all told

2023-11-30
Event volumes / Troll volumes
2,026 / 23,523 (8.61%)

Wu Hsin-ying's role as deputy was questioned to move closer to the consortium! Huang Shan-shan: Since February, the People's Party has been making small donations

Low — High
● Event
Size: Volume
Color: Troll volumes proportion

Entity	Troll volume %	Summary of Narratives
Ko Wen-je —	14.6%	· Attacking Ko Wen-je for being disloyal and untrustworthy, saying that Ko's tricks were seen through during the Blue and White coalition process. · Criticizing Ko Wen-je for hiring Cynthia Wu as his vice-president candidate is moving closer to the consortium.
KMT —	12.1%	· The various arguments attacking the KMT in the Blue and White coalition are untenable and they only want to cheat, and they also claim that Zhu Lilun will harm the KMT. · Said that the KMT didn't think clearly about cooperating with Ko Wen-je.
DPP —	9.1%	· Attacking DPP for fakeposting on the polls, leading to distortion of the polls. · Said that the DPP's governance was terrible, but the KMT would rather let the DPP come to power. He is an accomplice of the DPP.

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Observations of troll groups

The most active troll groups

This week, AI Labs observed two highly active troll groups on Facebook, #61009 and #61019, had very similar behaviors. These groups had 439 and 170 accounts, respectively. They became active starting 9/6, coinciding with Terry Guo's announcement to join the presidential election. Using a high volume of comments, these groups amplified existing narratives under the fan pages of Lai Ching-te, Hou You-yi, Ko Wen-je, and Terry Guo. In their top five most manipulated stories, four were common between these groups, primarily criticizing the KMT, DPP, and Ko Wen-je, while rarely attacking Terry Guo.

However, from the perspective of operational outcomes, the topics actively engaged in by the most proactive troll groups this week largely align with those of interest to Chinese official media. Going forward, there will be continued monitoring to see if the frequency and extent of China's intervention in the elections increase as the election approaches.

Furthermore, there is a high level of consistency in the periods of dormancy and activity among the main collaborating groups in the past month. For example, from October 16th to October 28th, there was minimal attack behavior, largely due to undecided party cooperation decisions. However, immediately following the selection of candidates by various factions on November 13th, there was a sudden surge in collaborative activities.

Troll Group: Facebook#61009

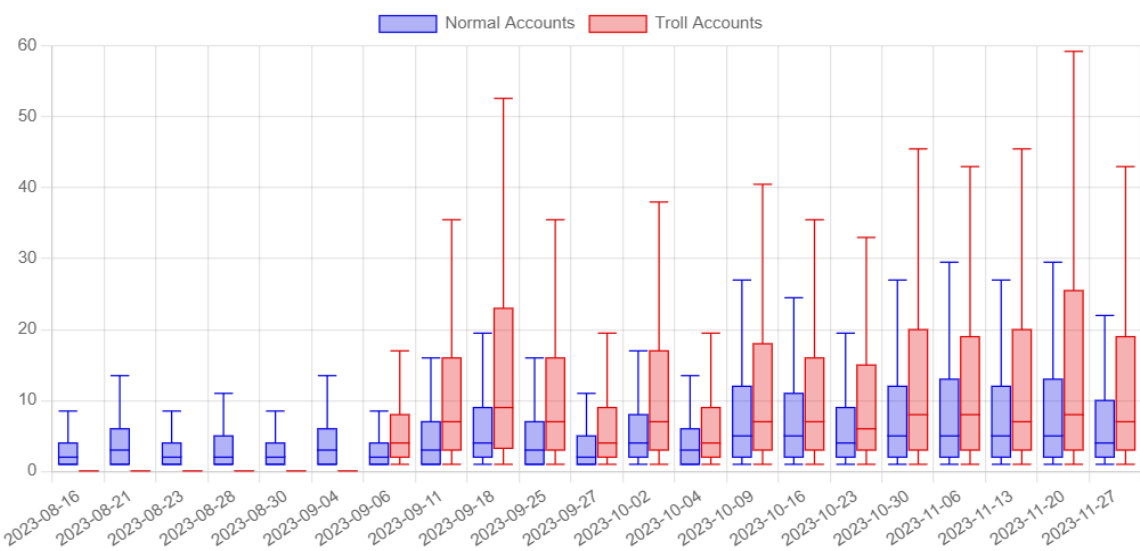| Troll Accounts	Operated stories	Target entities
439	2,266	2,267

Abnormal Behaviors

Comment Amount

Higher value means giving more comments.

T00049
Flooding the Information Space

DISARM FOUNDATION

Event time (UTC+8)	Title	Community volume	Troll volume (%)
2023-11-22 00:00 2023-11-24 15:28	🇨🇳 Newsletter / Blue and White Combined Breaking the Game? The KMT will hold its regular meeting on the …	810,254	2,902(29.37%)
2023-10-03 00:25 2023-11-07 18:37	🇨🇳 The mayors of the 15 counties of the Blue Camp jointly signed the "Blue and White Cooperation Plan …	849,534	2,270(22.99%)
2023-11-16 02:39 2023-11-20 10:19	🇨🇳 Presidential and Legislative Elections Registration From Today Chu Li-lun: Blue and White are only short of the door	445,169	1,969(19.94%)
2023-11-23 20:22 2023-11-24 14:46	🇨🇳 Ke Wen-che's deputy candidate starts the prize! Confirmed partner with "Princess Xinguang" Wu Hsin-ying	142,790	1,403(14.21%)
2023-11-15 10:18 2023-11-20 10:23	🇨🇳 Blue and white are out of harmony? Ke Wen-che shouted: Continue to fight to the end as the People's Party …	727,578	1,333(13.50%)

Targets of troll activities

🟥 Negative   🟩 Positive   大小 Font size represents troll volume

Shanshan Huang
Republic of China
Communist Party of China
Hou Yu-ih
Republic of China
Japan
Taiwan
Hou Yu-ih
Hou Yu-ih
Zhao Shaokang
Ke
Tsai Ing-wen
Ko Wen-Je
Guo
USA
Guo
Lai Ching-te
Kuomintang
China
Hou
rely
China
rely
Ko Wen-Je
Taiwan
Terry Guo
Lai Ching-te
Taiwan independence
People's Party
tower
Tsai
communist party
Tsai Ing-wen
F
Korea
Ke
Kuomintang
Democratic Progressive Party
Ma Ying-jeou
Hou
Eric Chu
horse
Wu Xinying
mainland
the cpc
Terry Guo
USA
Chen Shuibian
Han Kuo-yu

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Troll Group: Facebook#61019

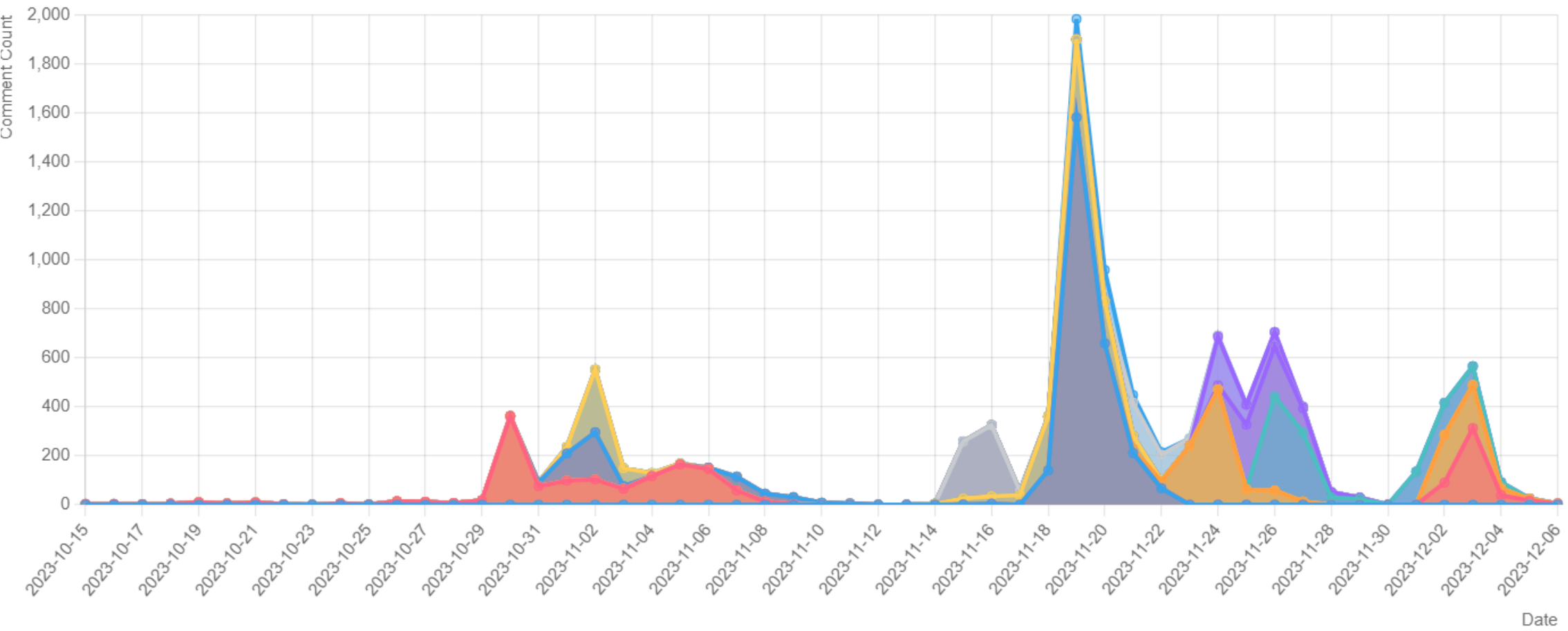| Troll Accounts	Operated stories	Target entities
170	2,066	1,641

Abnormal Behaviors

Comment Amount

Higher value means giving more comments.

T00049
Flooding the Information Space

DISARM
FOUNDATION
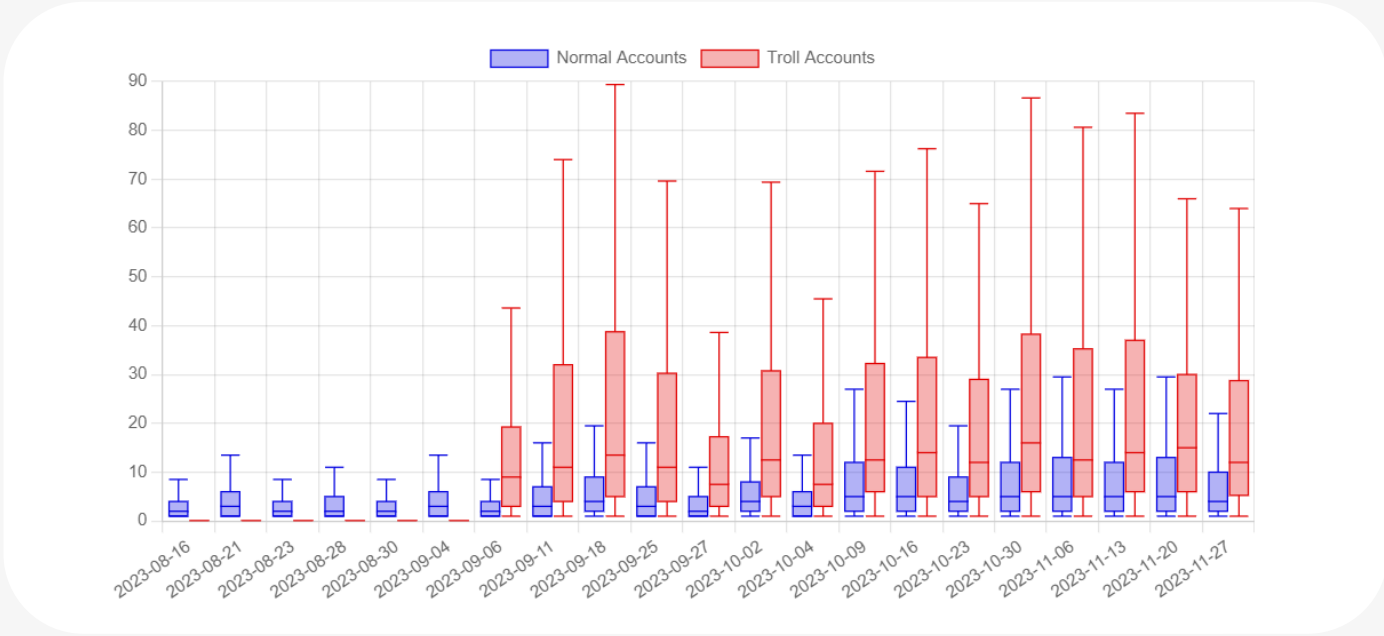
Operated Stories

Event time (UTC+8)	Title	Community volume	Troll volume (%)
2023-11-16 02:39 2023-11-20 10:19	🇨🇳 Presidential and Legislative Elections Registration From Today Chu Li-lun: Blue and White are only short of the door	445,169	2,664(9.96%)
2023-10-03 00:25 2023-11-07 18:37	🇨🇳 The mayors of the 15 counties of the Blue Camp jointly signed the "Blue and White Cooperation Plan ...	849,534	1,300(4.86%)

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2023-11-22 00:00 2023-11-24 15:28	🇨🇳 Newsletter / Blue and White Combined Breaking the Game? The KMT will hold its regular meeting on the...	810,254	893(3.34%)
2023-11-26 11:22 2023-11-26 16:05	🇨🇳 Blue and white are out of harmony? Ke Wen-che shouted: Continue to fight to the end as the People's Party ...	727,578	867(3.24%)
2023-11-15 10:18 2023-11-20 10:23	Changhua Auxiliary Elections Chen Su-yueh and Wu Yin-ning Tsai Ing-wen: The incumbents have no capital for laziness...	1,917	720(2.69%)

Targets of troll activities

🟥 Negative　🟩 Positive　大小 Font size represents troll volume

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