NISOS.

THREAT ANALYSIS

Inauthentic Network Counters The Great Translation Movement

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DISCLAIMER:

Executive Summary

Key Findings

Nisos researchers found that numerous inauthentic Twitter accounts are flooding the platform with posts to drown out The Great Translation Movement (TGTM). In total, 245 accounts posted over 8,700 times between 12 December 2022 and 18 April 2023 in a coordinated manner, with many posts occurring at similar time intervals. The campaign posts in English and targets global English-speaking audiences. The narratives and content were identical across multiple accounts. All accounts seek to discredit TGTM as the work of "foreign forces" attempting to conduct a "big smear" against China.

The Great Translation Movement is an online movement and social media campaign that translates content from Chinese audiences and netizens into English as part of a broader effort to expose Chinese-language government and state media propaganda. The movement began in spring 2022 and primarily posts via its official Twitter account.[1]

The majority of Twitter accounts countering TGTM are new and were created between September and November 2022. Several sets of accounts share common attributes such as similar profile and background images. We also found a clustering of 32 unique Twitter accounts that posted similar content at the same minute, showing that a central group likely operates them and coordinates the activity.

While we were unable to attribute the campaign to a specific actor, group, or organization, the accounts generally posted during work hours in China and display evidence of scheduled posting patterns.

Objective

We assess the network aims to drown out or erode trust in The Great Translation Movement and its content by flooding the hashtag with anti-TGTM narratives attacking the group's credibility and motives.

Reach and Impact

Utilizing inauthentic accounts to counter a specific online movement such as TGTM displays how likely pro-PRC forces are using social media as part of a dual strategy to flood information environments and drown out or reduce the credibility of dissenting opinions. Additionally, while the accounts in the network have low follower counts, their activity is steadily increasing over time.

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[1] https://twitter[.]com/TGTM_Official

Narratives

The network, utilizing inauthentic social media accounts, propagates narratives aiming to erode TGTM's credibility and uses a plethora of accusations to do so. For example, it accuses TGTM of using translations to take posts and content out of context, generalize them, and then disseminate fragmented pieces of information, concluding its efforts are not used for "positive communication."[2] [3] In all posts, the content begins with the hashtag #TheGreatTranslationMovement and is paired with a follow-on phrase, showing an attempt to flood the hashtag with anti-TGTM content. The network promoted the following additional narratives regarding TGTM:

- "The big translation should be called the big smear, and the so-called movement is nothing more than a farce."[4]
- The translations are not trustworthy, because "translating from one language to another often results in differences in the translated content due to different translation software."[5]
- The Great Translation Movement is causing further prejudice and discrimination against China.[6]
- The Great Translation Movement is only showing the viewpoints of "extreme" and small groups, which is leading to the vilification of the image of all Chinese citizens.[7]
- TGTM is "adding fuel to the fire" by slandering and discrediting China.[8] [9]
- The Great Translation Movement is turning a deaf ear towards the good deeds and kindness of the Chinese government and the Chinese people.[10]
- TGTM pretends to be taking a moral high ground when it itself is not perfect.[11]

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[2] http://twitter[.]com/FannyRi32660548/statuses/1613358267522252802
[3] http://twitter[.]com/Deborah28585402/statuses/1611057426740174849
[4] http://twitter[.]com/KelseyD28052985/statuses/1613363761813028866
[5] http://twitter[.]com/MiriamC11599118/statuses/1613363576932270081
[6] http://twitter[.]com/GloriaG15423533/statuses/1613359725676220417
[7] http://twitter[.]com/RobinNi16575027/statuses/1613359471987949568
[8] http://twitter[.]com/LolaLov50424203/statuses/1613359264881598466
[9] http://twitter[.]com/NicoleG88057920/statuses/1613359009171656705
[10] http://twitter[.]com/Lashond26718312/statuses/1613358337768443904
[11] http://twitter[.]com/Jennife33142001/statuses/1611053487940329474

Graphics 1 and 2: Examples of anti-TGTM memes shared on Twitter.

Pattern of Life

We identified the following findings regarding the network's pattern of life and activity:[12]

- The network's activity began on 12 December 2022 and increased over time, continuing through April 2023.
- Posts never occurred on Saturdays or Sundays, suggesting that individuals involved in the campaign were active Monday through Friday.
- Posts consistently begin on or around 9 AM China Standard Time, with clusters occurring in 15 minute intervals. This could indicate the use of post scheduling during these intervals.
- Many posts also consistently occur at midnight during China Standard Time, which could indicate posts were intentionally scheduled at that time so they would have more visibility with foreign audiences.
- The pattern of life remains consistent from the campaign's beginning in mid-December 2022 through April 2023.

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[12] Pattern of life refers to an entity's pattern of behavior over a given period of time.
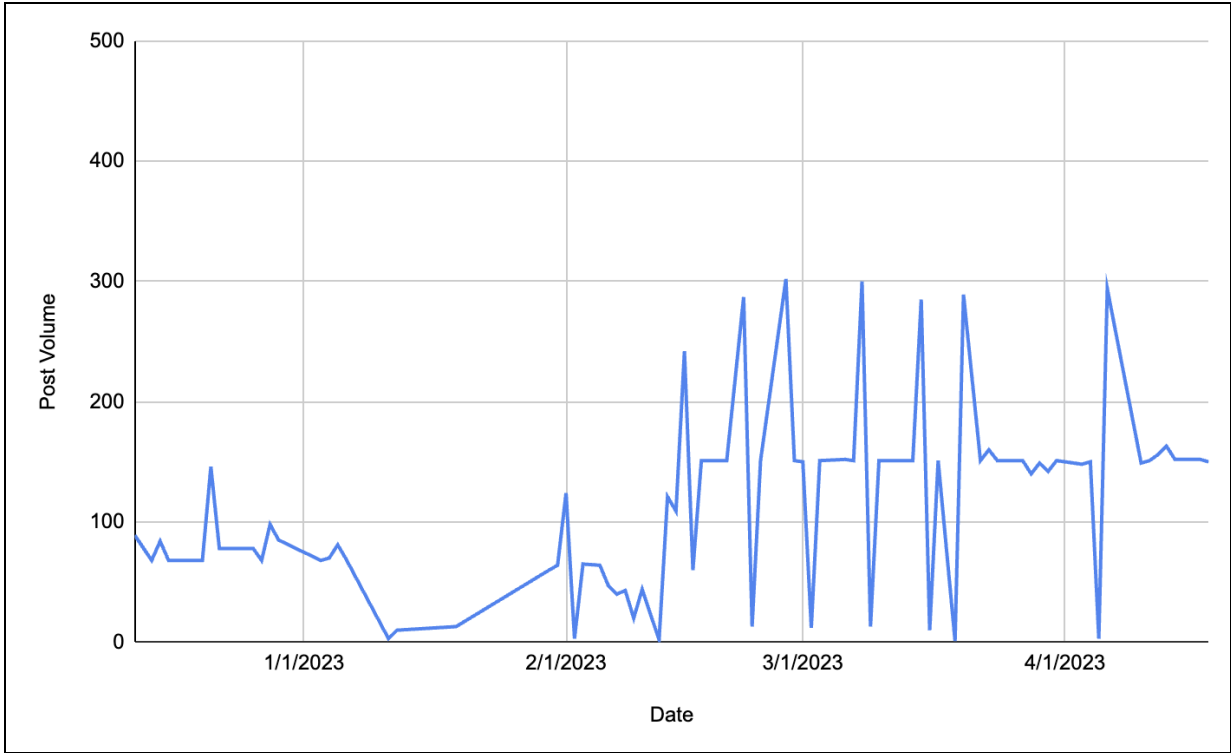
Graphic 3: The network's Twitter post volume over time.


Time vs. Date
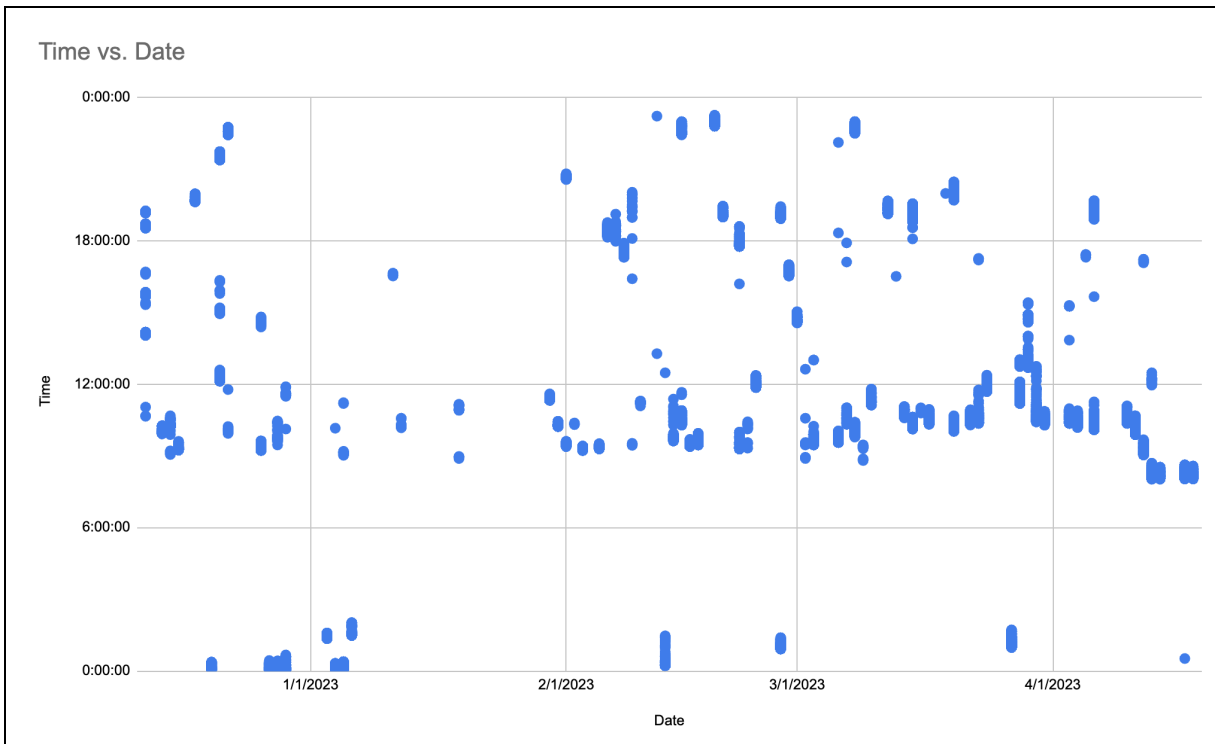
Graphic 4: Scatterplot of the campaign's posting patterns shown in China Standard Time.

Account Attributes

The majority of the 245 accounts participating in the campaign were created in either September or November 2022. Clusters of accounts used either images of abstract paintings or cats as their profile images, suggesting that the same operator or group of operators are likely controlling the accounts. In the examples shown below, we found groups of accounts that use an image of a cat as the profile picture, and a picture of an anime character or another cat as the background image. Other groupings use images of abstract art or horses in their profile and background images.
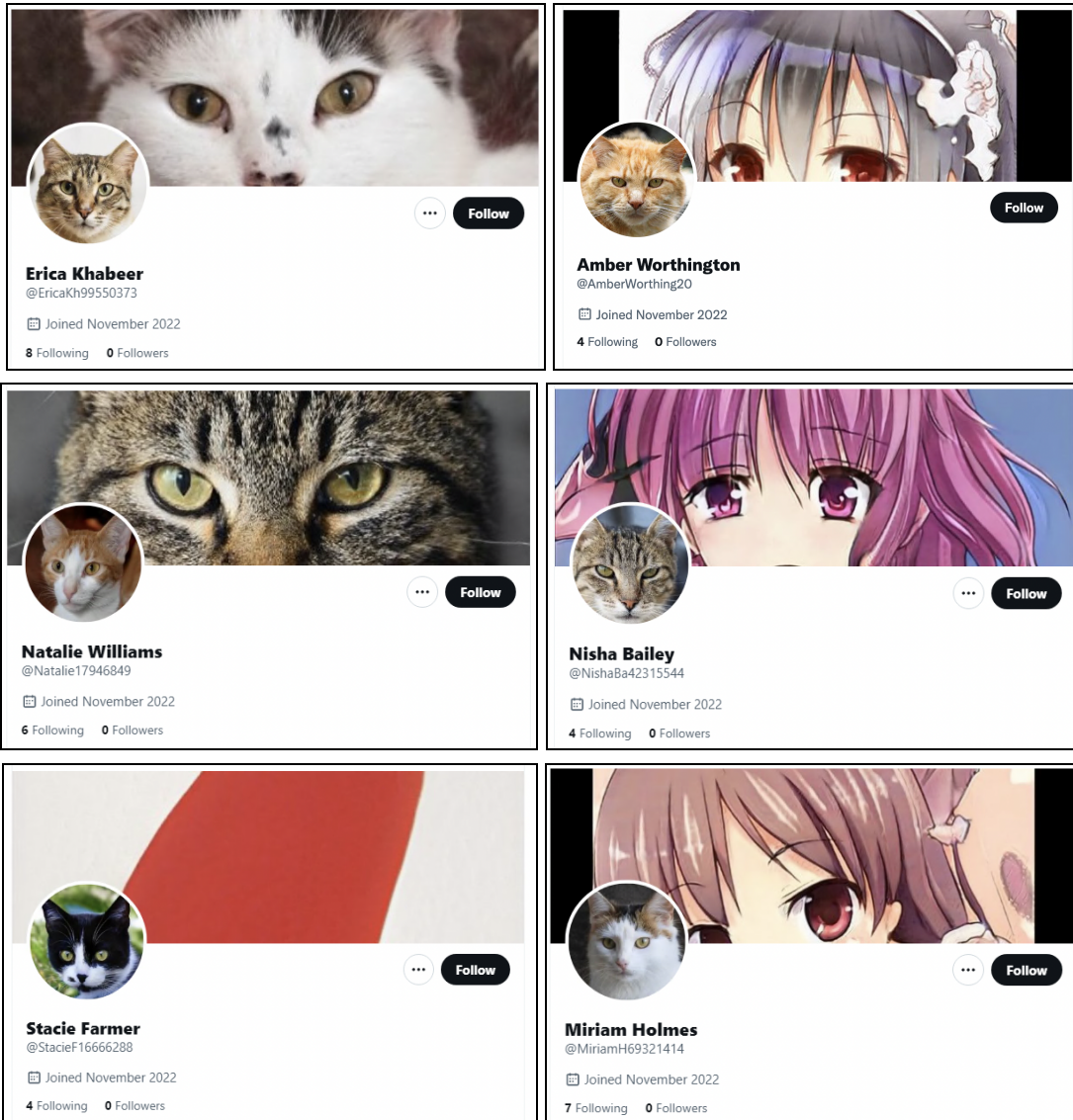
Graphics 5 - 10: Multiple Twitter accounts in the campaign that have profile pictures of cats and background images of cats or anime characters.
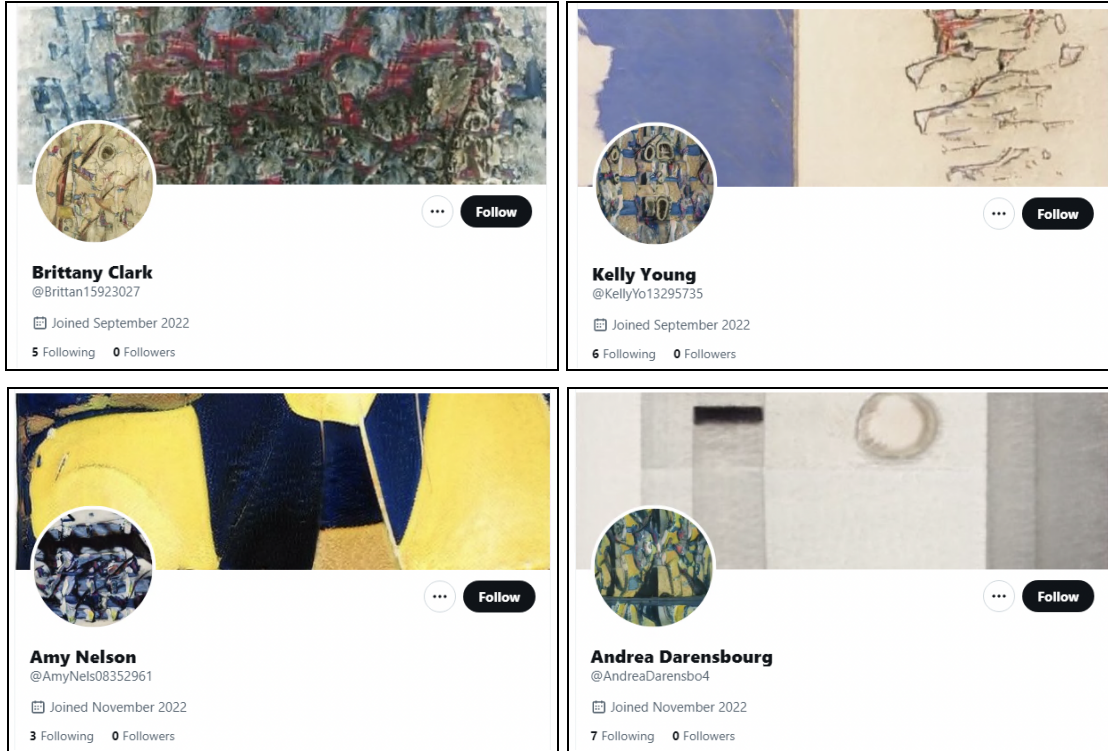
Graphics 11 - 14: Twitter accounts created in September and November 2022, which all feature abstract art in both their profile and background photos.

Evidence of Coordination

The network exhibits instances of coordination in which accounts post similar content at very close time intervals, with some accounts even posting at the same time. In some of the largest posting clusters, we found 32 unique accounts posting at the exact same minute.

Graphic 15 - 17: Examples of Twitter accounts posting the exact same content at the same time.

By way of example, the following 32 Twitter accounts posted similar content at the time:

Twitter User Handle	Post Content	Date and Timestamp	Post URL
@LindaWilemon4	#TheGreatTranslationMovement This kind of movement focuses on the dark side of society, and criticizes sentient beings from the moral high ground, as if the movement itself is perfect.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/LindaWilemon4/statuses/1637620713740808193
@Janelle84615133	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The communication mode of the "Great Translation Movement" is to take information out of context, to generalize, and to disseminate fragmented information, which is low-level and short-lived.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Janelle84615133/statuses/1637620685039194115
@KelseyH75604041	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The communication mode of the "Great Translation Movement" is to take information out of context, to generalize, and to disseminate fragmented information, which is low-level and short-lived.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/KelseyH75604041/statuses/1637620661496475648
@aprilha22783074	#TheGreatTranslationMovement This is another weird method of public opinion hype, taking advantage of the limitations of current translations, treating unreasonable translations as reasonable, making mistakes and spreading absurdities.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	https://twitter[.]com/AprilHa22783074/statuses/1637620646669611008
@Cynthia11369325	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The way the "Great Translation Movement" spreads is to attract people's attention with headlines, embarrassing content, and shocking.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Cynthia11369325/statuses/1637620628789313538
@Jessica21199493	#TheGreatTranslationMovement Whether it is spreading the truth or bewitching people's hearts, whether it is reflecting demands or gaining attention, the "Great Translation Movement" is a ridiculous organization that is going downhill.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Jessica21199493/statuses/1637620626528632835
@TiaraWi67190020	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The "Great Translation Movement" is another kind of public opinion movement, misleading netizens' emotions into disgust and resistance to China, in order to discredit China.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/TiaraWi67190020/statuses/1637620617686990850
@TammyFo84775267	#TheGreatTranslationMovement This kind of movement focuses on the dark side of society, and criticizes sentient beings from the moral high ground, as if the movement itself is perfect.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/TammyFo84775267/statuses/1637620610456080384
@JennyHa47743073	#TheGreatTranslationMovement This kind of movement focuses on the dark side of society, and criticizes sentient beings from the moral high ground, as if the movement itself is perfect.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/JennyHa47743073/statuses/1637620610875490310
@DawnKroh1	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The "big translation" should be called the "big smear", and the so-called "movement" is nothing more than a farce. Fake "translation" in the name of smearing the reality, a typical trickery.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/DawnKroh1/statuses/1637620608631439361
@Elizabe37895670	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The way the "Great Translation	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Elizab

	Movement" spreads is to attract people's attention with headlines, embarrassing content, and shocking.		e37895670/statuses/16376 20609386422272
@DebbieR53229818	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The "big translation" should be called the "big smear", and the so-called "movement" is nothing more than a farce. Fake "translation" in the name of smearing the reality, a typical trickery.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Debbi eR53229818/statuses/1637 620602927194112
@Rebecca02007224	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The way the "Great Translation Movement" spreads is to attract people's attention with headlines, embarrassing content, and shocking.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Rebec ca02007224/statuses/1637 620600360271872
@Samanth35906954	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The "big translation" should be called the "big smear", and the so-called "movement" is nothing more than a farce. Fake "translation" in the name of smearing the reality, a typical trickery.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Saman th35906954/statuses/16376 20601216024576
@JanetRo19451340	#TheGreatTranslationMovement It is impossible to be truly convincing if you use the banner of "justice" without actually promoting justice, but just blindly hype up negative emotions.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/JanetR o19451340/statuses/16376 20597424373762
@DawnBro40139093	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The communication mode of the "Great Translation Movement" is to take information out of context, to generalize, and to disseminate fragmented information, which is low-level and short-lived.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Dawn Bro40139093/statuses/163 76620592466640898
@Stephan24130032	#TheGreatTranslationMovement This kind of movement focuses on the dark side of society, and criticizes sentient beings from the moral high ground, as if the movement itself is perfect.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Stepha n24130032/statuses/16376 20586649092098
@SarahGentle6	#TheGreatTranslationMovement Whether it is spreading the truth or bewitching people's hearts, whether it is reflecting demands or gaining attention, the "Great Translation Movement" is a ridiculous organization that is going downhill.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Sarah Gentle6/statuses/16376205 88893052928
@Jennife82979460	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The communication mode of the "Great Translation Movement" is to take information out of context, to generalize, and to disseminate fragmented information, which is low-level and short-lived.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Jennif e82979460/statuses/16376 20578734551041
@JennySm42522775	#TheGreatTranslationMovement Whether it is spreading the truth or bewitching people's hearts, whether it is reflecting demands or gaining attention, the "Great Translation Movement" is a ridiculous organization that is going downhill.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Jenny Sm42522775/statuses/1637 620578487074826
@SaraYou11405444	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The tricks that artists can't play, are used by a group of jumping clowns to entertain themselves. What really shows off is your IQ, not your poor "translation" level.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/SaraYo u11405444/statuses/16376 20570039754752
@RachelW15775652	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The tricks that artists can't play, are used by a group of jumping clowns to entertain themselves. What really shows off is your IQ, not your poor "translation" level.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Rachel W15775652/statuses/16376 20567577690113
@ReginaM21097607	#TheGreatTranslationMovement Whether it is spreading the truth or bewitching people's hearts, whether it is reflecting demands or gaining attention, the "Great Translation Movement" is a ridiculous organization that is going downhill.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Regina M21097607/statuses/16376 20553962889217
@AmyHarr39193391	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The "Great Translation Movement" is another kind of public opinion movement, misleading netizens' emotions into disgust and resistance to China, in order to discredit China.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/AmyHa rr39193391/statuses/16376 20544773169153
@MaggieS90462556	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The "big translation" should be	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Maggi

	called the "big smear", and the so-called "movement" is nothing more than a farce. Fake "translation" in the name of smearing the reality, a typical trickery.		eS90462556/statuses/1637 620546148917248
@MarthaR95130925	#TheGreatTranslationMovement It is impossible to be truly convincing if you use the banner of "justice" without actually promoting justice, but just blindly hype up negative emotions.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Marth aR95130925/statuses/1637 620537634566144
@lissett31972363	#TheGreatTranslationMovement This is another weird method of public opinion hype, taking advantage of the limitations of current translations, treating unreasonable translations as reasonable, making mistakes and spreading absurdities.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	https://twitter[.]com/Lisset t31972363/statuses/163762 0536938229767
@HollyHa85897005	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The way the "Great Translation Movement" spreads is to attract people's attention with headlines, embarrassing content, and shocking.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/HollyH a85897005/statuses/16376 20511361454081
@WendyYamamoto14	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The tricks that artists can't play, are used by a group of jumping clowns to entertain themselves. What really shows off is your IQ, not your poor "translation" level.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/Wendy Yamamoto14/statuses/163 7620500007383047
@b05477950	#TheGreatTranslationMovement This is another weird method of public opinion hype, taking advantage of the limitations of current translations, treating unreasonable translations as reasonable, making mistakes and spreading absurdities.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	https://twitter[.]com/b054 77950/statuses/163762047 6879962118
@debdonald8	#TheGreatTranslationMovement This is another weird method of public opinion hype, taking advantage of the limitations of current translations, treating unreasonable translations as reasonable, making mistakes and spreading absurdities.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	https://twitter[.]com/DebD onald8/statuses/16376204 76351590401
@jo64159295	#TheGreatTranslationMovement The communication mode of the "Great Translation Movement" is to take information out of context, to generalize, and to disseminate fragmented information, which is low-level and short-lived.	20-Mar-2023 10:02 AM	http://twitter[.]com/jo6415 9295/statuses/1637620472 123727873