

**Framing the “Nation”: Discourse of National Identity Construction in the Taiwan Region—  
An Analysis of 2024 Electoral Campaign**

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### Abstract

Constructivist accounts hold that nations are discursively produced, but we still know little about whether electoral discourse organises the signifier “nation” into stable equivalential chains or whether meanings emerge ad hoc across contexts. The ambiguity between minzu (ethnic people) and guojia (state/polity) in Chinese contexts further enlarges the semantic space through which political actors contest national identity. Treating “nation” as an empty signifier in Laclau’s sense, this article examines how its meaning is fixed, pluralised, or left indeterminate during Taiwan’s 2024 presidential campaign.

Empirically, we analyse a multi-source corpus from debates, rallies, speeches, news reports, and social media, treating sentences with  $\pm 1$  sentence of local context as the unit of analysis. Building on a dual-layer framing scheme centred on national identity, we use gpt-4o to annotate frames at scale.

First, we find that national identity discourse is structured rather than ad hoc: candidates and parties will repeatedly mobilise distinct equivalential chains, and these patterns vary systematically across venues and stages. Additionally, a small set of signifiers will preferentially act as nodal points that are both structurally central and context-sensitive, being preferentially absorbed into civic frames in domestic policy talk but shifting toward ethnic or security frames in cross-Straits and international discussions. Lastly, we find that antagonistic framing organises multiple intersecting axes of othering, including cross-Straits, partisan, generational, and spatial divisions.

Results show that “nation” in Taiwan operates as a genuinely floating signifier whose meanings shift in systematic relation to institutional positions and situational stakes.

## Framing the “Nation”: Discourse of National Identity Construction in the Taiwan Region— An Analysis of 2024 Electoral Campaign

Recently empirical researches treat nations as socially constructed and historically contingent, sustained by ongoing discursive contestation rather than primordial ties (Dar, 2022; Oran F., 2022; Wodak, 2009; Machin, 2015). In Taiwan’s 2024 presidential election, this constructivist insight is visible in how candidates and media repeatedly return to a dense cluster of terms(e.g. Taiwan, Zhonghua Minguo, guojia (state), minzu (people/nation), and democracy), while the referents and implied boundaries of these signifiers shift across venues and audiences. These shifts are amplified in a Chinese linguistic environment where “nation” has long oscillated between minzu and guojia, producing a durable field of semantic ambiguity that can be strategically exploited in political communication (Cao, 2021; Yujiro, 2001; Connor, 1978; Banerjee, 2021; Brubaker, 2004). Laclau and Mouffe conceptualise nation as an empty or floating signifier whose meaning is fixed only contingently through chains of equivalence and antagonistic frontiers, while framing research tries to show how such meanings are strategically assembled and cued in concrete political communication (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Against this backdrop, this article asks how, in Taiwan’s 2024 presidential campaign, the semantic openness of nation is organised into actor- and venue-specific equivalential chains, nodal signifiers, and axes of othering, and how these configurations shift between domestic policy talk and cross-Strait or international contexts.

Classic works on nations and nationalism argue nations as “imagined communities” sustained through shared narratives, symbols, and institutional practices rather than given ethnic essences (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1986; Calhoun, 1997; Miller, 1995; Bieber, 2020). Critical discourse analysis and related approaches have shown how media texts, political speeches, and everyday talk reproduce and contest national identities, often by naturalising particular boundaries between “us” and “them” (Wodak et al., 2009; Machin, 2013; Antonsich, 2015). In research on national identity and electoral discourse, however, empirical applications of these ideas still rely largely on small-N, case-based analyses that qualitatively demonstrate that

“the nation is contested”, while offering little in the way of systematic, corpus-level measurements of equivalential chains, nodal signifiers, or antagonistic frontiers. A small but growing set of studies begins to integrate discourse theory with corpus linguistics and network-based text analysis, yet such work remains rare and is mostly concentrated on populism and related topics rather than on the organisation of national identity discourse in electoral campaigns (e.g. Bakumov, 2018; Semykina, 2021; Nikisianis, 2018).

The complexity of national identity discourse intensifies further when the concept of nation is translated into Chinese(Cao, 2021; Lee, 2013; Berry, 1992; Yujiro, 2001; Connor, 1978; Banerjee, 2021; Brubaker, 2004). Its standard translations carry a built-in duality, most notably “minzu”, which often evokes an ethnic group or civilisational people, and “guojia”, which denotes the state or polity(Bilik, 2007; Ma, 2017). This inherent “minzu–guojia” tension creates a core conceptual ambiguity, transforming the nation into a fluid “field of meaning” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) that is particularly ripe for political interpretation and manipulation. The linguistic ambivalence between these terms opens a wide discursive space in which political actors can strategically imbue the nation with shifting connotations of sovereignty, ethnic belonging, and collective fate.

This ambiguity is especially pronounced in Taiwan’s political context, where historical legacies, evolving cross-Strait relations, and internal debates over collective identity converge to heighten the semantic stakes of nation-related discourse (Cabestan, 2005; Jiang, 2017; Shen, 2013; Lee, 2020). Survey and discourse studies alike point to the absence of a settled consensus on national affiliation, with substantial shares of the population endorsing hybrid or dual identities rather than a single, uncontested national label (Election Study Center, NCCU, 2025; Pew Research Center, 2024). Against this backdrop, the lexical boundaries between minzu, guojia, Taiwan, Zhonghua Minguo, and Zhonghua minzu become particularly porous. Political actors across the spectrum exploit this semantic flexibility to articulate competing visions of identity, legitimacy, and political future, so that even subtle lexical choices can signal broader ideological orientations or identity claims (Cabestan, 2005; Jiang, 2017; Wodak et al., 2009). In this sense,

Taiwan's national identity debate offers an ideal setting for examining how an empty signifier is temporarily fixed, how its meanings drift across domestic versus cross-Strait contexts, and how different actors seek to stabilise or unsettle these articulations (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

To address these questions, we leverage a dataset that includes televised debates and policy presentations, campaign rallies and speeches, news reports, and social media content from Taiwan's 2024 election cycle. Combining insights from political communication and discourse theory with recent advances in natural language processing, we construct a sentence-level corpus with light normalisation, treating each sentence (augmented by  $\pm 1$  sentence of local context) as the basic unit of analysis and enriching it with structured metadata on speaker, party, addressee or target (policy, institution, procedure, symbol), and event stage.

Using this corpus, we implement a dual-layer framing scheme that distinguishes general issue frames (L1) from national identity-specific connotations (L2), and use gpt-4o to annotate frames at scale. Rather than stopping at aggregate label distributions, the analysis proceeds in three steps: first, we use co-occurrence statistics and network methods to recover equivalential chains among L2 labels across actors, venues, and campaign moments; second, we examine associations between high-frequency signifiers and L2 labels to identify nodal points and patterns of semantic drift between domestic and cross-Strait or international contexts; and third, focusing on L2 categories for differentiated identity, shared crisis, and shared enemy, we combine frame information with named-entity recognition to map recurrent us and them and the axes along which antagonistic boundaries are drawn.

Building on this design, we want to explore whether the discursive construction of nation in Taiwan's 2024 presidential campaign exhibits recurrent, structurally regular framing strategies rather than being purely contingent or improvised. If so, national identity discourse would appear as partially governed by underlying rhetorical logics that lend it internal coherence, even as the signifier nation remains fluid and contested. In Laclau's terms, such logics would be instantiated through nodal points—central signifiers around which meanings coalesce—and chains of equivalence that link disparate elements under a shared ideological grammar.

Against this backdrop, this study explores the following research questions:

RQ1: How do different candidates and parties in Taiwan’s 2024 presidential election organise national identity into equivalential chains at the level of L2 frames?

Specifically, which L2 labels tend to co-occur to form relatively stable chains of identity, and to what extent do these configurations remain stable or drift across time and across communicative venues?

RQ2: which high-frequency terms function as central anchors within these chains?

Specifically, how strongly are these terms bound to different L2 frames, when they are mobilised in more ethnic versus more civic registers, and how their associations shift between local policy discussions and cross-Straits or international contexts?

RQ3: how “we” versus “they” are drawn and who is recurrently cast as the Other?

Specifically, which entities and groups repeatedly appear as “them”, whether parties emphasise different spatial axes of conflict, and how the prominence of these antagonistic frames?

Based on these considerations, we advance two hypotheses:

H1. In communication oriented primarily toward domestic audiences, nation and national identity are articulated predominantly through civic frames that emphasise shared responsibility, institutions, and future-oriented visions of collective life.

H2. In cross-Straits or outward-facing contexts, explicitly ethnic or civilisational framings—often indexed by minzu and related vocabulary—are more likely to be activated, particularly in conjunction with crisis and enemy frames.

The empirical analysis will try to evaluate these hypotheses, to show where they are confirmed, qualified, or contradicted, and to specify more precisely under which conversational settings and event triggers ethnic framings of the nation actually emerge.

### **Nation as Contested Signifier in Chinese Context**

As noted in the introduction, constructivist accounts of nationalism, from Anderson’s imagined communities to Gellner’s modernist thesis (1983) and Smith’s ethnosymbolism (1986), converge on a basic distinction between nation as a collective identity, state as a sovereign

political organization, and ethnicity as shared descent or culture. These theoretical perspectives illuminate how national identity can be anchored in both institutional membership and cultural genealogy, a distinction that becomes especially salient in Chinese-language debates over minzu and guojia.

The complexity of nation intensifies when translated into the Chinese linguistic and historical context. Since the late Qing, intellectuals and officials experimented with different renderings of nation(Zhao, 2000), importing minzu via Japanese political vocabulary and pairing it with guojia to describe a “unified multi-ethnic state” (tongyi de duo minzu guojia). In this configuration, minzu initially carried strong racial and genealogical connotations and was crystallized in the early Republican and later PRC discourse of Zhonghua minzu as a single Chinese nation encompassing Han and officially recognized minorities as well as overseas Chinese communities(Carlson et al., 2016). By contrast, guojia denoted the territorial state and its governing apparatus, but in everyday usage also evoked family and homeland, further blurring the boundaries between ethnic peoplehood, national community, and state institutions(Wang, 2024). The resulting minzu–guojia tension thus forms a core conceptual ambiguity: the same term “nation” can invoke a civilizational ethnos, a modern state, or a diffuse cultural community, depending on context.

This linguistic ambivalence has substantive political implications. On the one hand, scholarship on PRC state-led nationalism shows that official discourse often defines minzuzhuyi as loyalty to a trans-ethnic Zhonghua minzu—a multi-ethnic “Chinese nation” that formally encompasses the 56 recognized minzu as well as ethnic Chinese communities in Taiwan and overseas. In this formulation, appeals to shared ancestry, cultural continuity, and a history of national humiliation are mobilised to legitimate projects of national unity and territorial integration. Research on language, politics, and identity further shows how the symbolic pairing and decoupling of “Taiwan” and “China” in official rhetoric, educational materials, and news coverage gradually moved the center of identity from an orthodox Chinese nation toward a localized Taiwanese community, without fully erasing references to Zhonghua minzu(Chang,

2014; Huang, 2009; Lai, 2018). This slippage between people, state, and ethnos generates a wide semantic field in which the meaning of “nation” can be flexibly interpreted, layered, or strategically obfuscated.

Based on the background in question, scholarship on Taiwan has explicitly imported the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism to differentiate alternative logics of nation-building on the island (Wu, 2007; Wu & Shen, 2000; Ngeow, 2010; Lousche, 2022). Ethnic forms of Taiwanese nationalism emphasise shared culture, language, provincial origin, and historical experience, whereas civic forms define the nation primarily in terms of attachment to political institutions, democratic procedures, and the de facto state on Taiwan, in principle open to citizens of different cultural backgrounds. Using nationwide survey data, Huang (2005) applies latent class analysis to the 2001 Taiwan’s Election and Democratization Study and shows that “Taiwanese/Chinese” identity and national identity constitute empirically distinct dimensions rather than a single ethnic cleavage. Subsequent work drawing on time-series data from the NCCU Election Study Center and panel surveys similarly finds that, since the early 1990s, the main shift in identity has occurred in the political-state dimension, which shifts away from identification with China as the relevant state and toward identification with Taiwan’s own polity. Whereas, cultural attachments to a broader Chinese civilisation remain more ambivalent and layered (Shen, 2013; Zhong, 2016). Democratization and repeated electoral competition have progressively strengthened a civic understanding of Taiwanese nationhood anchored in democratic norms and constitutional self-government, without fully erasing ethnic cleavages or cultural Chineseness (Wang, 2005; Chen, 2012; Chen, 2023; Alemán, 2018; Hur, 2020).

In this sense, the role of language in identity construction is paramount, scholars show how political elites, media, and civic actors articulate Taiwan and China through contested naming practices, narrative templates, and symbolic oppositions. For example, Chang and Holt’s analyses of National Day speeches demonstrate how successive ROC presidents have shifted the labels used for China, from derogatory “Communist bandits” to Chinese Communists, mainland, and how these lexical choices reconfigure Taiwan’s imagined relationship to China and to the

broader international community (Chang, 2011). Research on language, politics, and identity further shows how the symbolic pairing and decoupling of Taiwan and China in official rhetoric, educational materials, and news coverage gradually moved the center of identity from an orthodox Chinese nation toward a localized Taiwanese community (Wu, 2007). Thus, national identity in Taiwan is continuously re-negotiated through the naming of political entities, the framing of cross-Strait relations, and the construction of internal Others.

Both survey-based and discourse-analytic studies converge on the view that political discourse is the primary arena in which this identity is constructed and contested: through naming practices, antagonistic codings of us and them, and the legitimization of particular constitutional and territorial arrangements. What remains underexplored, however, is how this discursive arena is structured at scale, and how different framings of the nation cluster, diverge, and draw boundaries across parties, venues, and stages of a campaign.

### **Laclau, Equivalential Chains, and Antagonistic Boundaries**

Political discourse theory, most prominently developed by Laclau and Mouffe, reconceptualises social and political identities as the contingent outcome of discursive articulations rather than as pre-given essences (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). In this view, meaning is only ever partially fixed in an open field of signification, through the articulation of elements into more or less durable configurations. Central to this approach are nodal points—privileged signifiers that organise surrounding meanings—together with chains of equivalence and difference and antagonistic frontiers that structure the discursive field. Chains of equivalence link heterogeneous demands or attributes by downplaying their internal differences so that they can be articulated as expressions of a common project, while chains of difference foreground distinctions and delimitations among elements that are not subsumed under a shared identity. As an equivalential chain expands, the signifier that names and represents this chain becomes relatively “empty”: an empty or floating signifier that condenses diverse claims without being reducible to any of them (Laclau, 2005). Antagonistic frontiers, in turn, draw a line between this equivalential chain—often condensed in an empty signifier—and a constitutive outside that is constructed as its

obstacle or enemy. From this vantage point, the nation is not a fixed referent but an empty or floating signifier that can condense heterogeneous demands and attributes into a relatively coherent chain of equivalences, while simultaneously demarcating an antagonistic outside.

This logic has been widely taken up in analyses of populist discourse, which offer a more concrete template for thinking about how equivalential chains and antagonistic frontiers are structured. Populist discourse has been described, in Laclau's terms, as the construction of "the people" through the equivalential linkage of otherwise disparate social demands, articulated in opposition to an obstructive "elite" (Laclau, 2005; Hatakka, 2019). De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017) refine this insight by distinguishing between a vertical axis opposing "the people" to "the elite" and a horizontal axis distinguishing insiders from outsiders to the nation. Populism, on their account, primarily operates along the vertical people–elite axis, while nationalism centres on the horizontal inside–outside boundary of the nation; in practice, these logics often intersect, such that "the people" are imagined as a national people pitted against both domestic elites and foreign "others." This two-dimensional space highlights that discursive frontiers need not be singular: antagonisms can be drawn simultaneously along national, partisan, socio-economic, generational, and spatial lines.

Laclau-inspired political discourse theory has also informed a growing body of empirical research, but its operationalisation has remained uneven. Much of this work relies on close reading of relatively small corpora—such as key speeches, party manifestos, or selected media texts—to reconstruct empty signifiers, equivalential chains, and antagonistic frontiers in a qualitative fashion (e.g., Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Stengel, 2019). Analysts identify candidate empty signifiers, trace which demands or identities are articulated as equivalent under their banner, and map how adversaries are named and positioned across texts. A smaller number of studies have experimented with more systematic, corpus- or network-based approaches that approximate discourse-theoretical concepts. Some contributions model discourse as a network of co-occurring elements and use centrality measures to infer which signifiers function as nodal points in a given field (Haditaghi et al., 2016), while others combine lexicometric techniques with

narrative analysis to capture temporary “fixations” of meaning and the rules by which elements are linked or differentiated (Felgenhauer, 2007). These efforts demonstrate that key notions such as empty signifiers, equivalential chains, and antagonistic frontiers can be translated into structural patterns in text. However, we still lack a set of explicit structural measures that capture how national signifiers are articulated, clustered, and opposed in electoral discourse.

## Data

### *Data Collection*

This sets up what measure(s) you took during your experiment, including information about *how* those measures were gathered. Was it with some form of worksheet? Was it collected electronically? If electronic, was it through a website or something like E-Prime? If a keyboard was used, were there any specifics about the keys used?

### *The DPM Framework for National Identity Construction*

This study proposes the DPM Framework to analyze how political discourse during Taiwan’s leadership elections contributes to the construction of national identity. Moving beyond issue-based content analysis or isolated identity references, the framework emphasizes how policy debates become key discursive arenas in which the nation is constructed as a contested “field of meaning” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

Drawing from framing theory (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 1972), constructivist theories of nationalism (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1986), and discourse theory (Fairclough, 1992; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), the DPM Framework treats policy frames as strategic tools for shaping collective identity. It consists of three interrelated dimensions: Defining the National Self (D), Positioning the Nation Globally (P), and Mobilizing the National Collective (M).

**Defining the National Self: “Who Are We?”** This dimension explores how discourse articulates the nation’s internal identity—its values, history, and boundaries.

**Asserting Sovereignty and Agency:** Policy frames emphasize autonomy in areas such as defense (Security frames), trade (Economic frames), or legal jurisdiction (Legality frames).

**Differentiating Collective Identity:** Discursive boundaries distinguish “us” from various internal or external “others,” often through Morality frames (e.g., contrasting political values) or Human Interest frames (e.g., emphasizing cultural uniqueness).

**Reinterpreting History and Memory:** Historical narratives are reframed through Responsibility and Policy Prescription frames to construct a shared sense of the past and shape identity foundations.

**Positioning the Nation Globally: “Where Do We Stand?”** This dimension examines how discourse situates the nation within the international system.

**Framing External Challenges:** Security and Conflict frames identify risks and common threats to reinforce collective awareness and unity.

**Shaping International Status:** Legality and Policy Prescription frames are used to highlight international engagement, institutional participation, and alignment with global norms.

**Constructing Comparative Identity:** Economic and Policy frames benchmark national performance and articulate aspirations for international competitiveness or leadership.

**Mobilizing the National Collective: “Where Are We Going?”** This dimension focuses on how discourse fosters internal cohesion and collective direction.

**Evoking Shared Emotions and Values:** Human Interest and Morality frames strengthen emotional bonds through stories of resilience and appeals to common principles.

**Fostering Pride and Responsibility:** Economic and Responsibility frames celebrate achievements and encourage civic participation in national development.

**Articulating a Shared Vision:** Policy Prescription frames outline future goals and call for collective action toward a common trajectory.

## Frame Detection

This study constructs a locally deployed pre-trained language model-based classification system, which was subsequently subjected to supervised fine-tuning and evaluation using an annotated corpus.

### ***Data Preparation and Preprocessing***

We leveraged a pre-defined framework of 21 distinct categories across two hierarchical levels of political discourse. Through a meticulous manual annotation process, a gold standard dataset comprising 135 text entries and their corresponding labels was generated. In the data preprocessing phase, both textual content and their assigned labels underwent numerical encoding via LabelEncoder. The dataset was then partitioned into training and validation sets at an 8:2 ratio. Utilizing Hugging Face's Dataset utility, the data format was transformed into a structure compatible with model input requirements, followed by truncation and padding to a maximum sequence length of 256 tokens, specifically tailored to accommodate BERT's input specifications. For model loading, Hugging Face's BertForSequenceClassification interface was invoked, establishing a fully connected output layer designed for single-label classification within the established framework.

### ***Training Process and Hyperparameter Configuration***

Regarding hyperparameter settings, this research employed Hugging Face's Trainer interface for management. The training duration (`num_train_epochs`) was set to 3, with a `batch_size` of 4. The training process utilized a cross-entropy loss function and was iteratively optimized using the Adam optimizer within a CPU environment. Notably, to enhance the model's generalization capabilities across various categories, `evaluation_strategy='epoch'` was enabled during both the training and validation phases.

For the DeepSeek model, the following prompt was employed to elicit dual-label classifications within the Taiwanese political context:

You are an expert in public opinion analysis within the Taiwanese political context. Your task is to determine the dual labels for a given text, specifically categorizing it according to the following schema:

[Label 1: Political Semantic Framework] {label1\_guide}

[Label 2: National Identity Construction Connotation] {label2\_guide}

Please refer to the following few-shot examples: {few\_shot\_examples}

Now, please determine the labels for the following text: “{text}”

Please return only in the following format: Label 1: xxx Label 2: xxx

### ***Evaluation Results and Comparative Analysis***

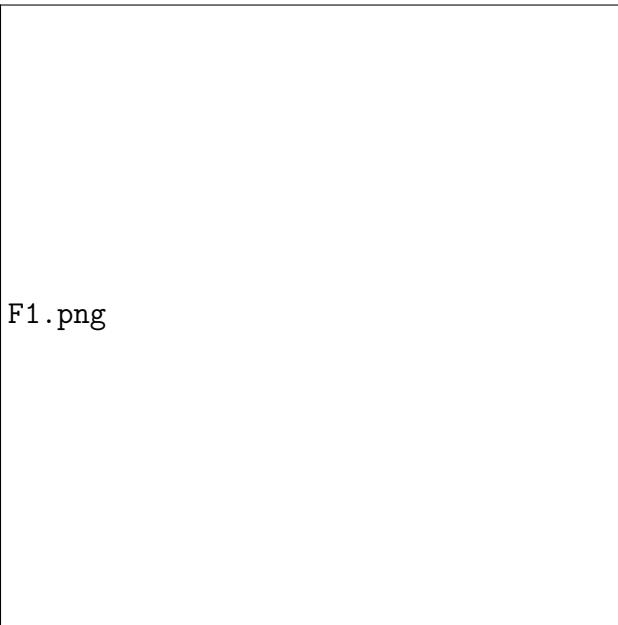
The conventional BERT model successfully completed three training epochs within the local deployment environment, yielding metrics including loss, gradient norm, learning rate, and accuracy.

During the training trajectory, the loss function exhibited a discernible downward trend (from 2.14 at the 1st step to 1.10 at the 15th step). Post each training epoch, a validation assessment was conducted. The eval\_loss at the end of epochs 1, 2, and 3 were 1.7891, 1.7197, and 1.7504, respectively, with corresponding validation accuracies of 32.69%, 34.61%, and 32.69%. This minor fluctuation indicates a stable model fitting capacity but suggests a persistent generalization bottleneck. Concurrently, the gradient norm generally remained within the 7–19 range.

Given the linear decay learning rate strategy (decreasing from  $4.68 \times 10^{-5}$  to  $1.92 \times 10^{-6}$ ), this suggests a degree of optimization potential. The model concluded training after 156 steps, with a total training duration of 340 seconds, averaging 8.17 samples processed per second.

The trained model was subsequently deployed for prediction tasks on the validation set, generating a confusion matrix and classification report. Overall, the system successfully accomplished the end-to-end multi-label text classification task; however, accuracy remains to be enhanced, primarily constrained by the small sample size and class imbalance issues.

We further investigated the relationship between support and F1-score. Results indicate that the BERT model exhibits a significant negative correlation across categories ( $r = -0.85, p < .001$ ). Notably, its performance experiences a precipitous decline when category support exceeds 5 instances, with some categories' F1-scores falling below 0.05. This observation strongly



**Figure 1**

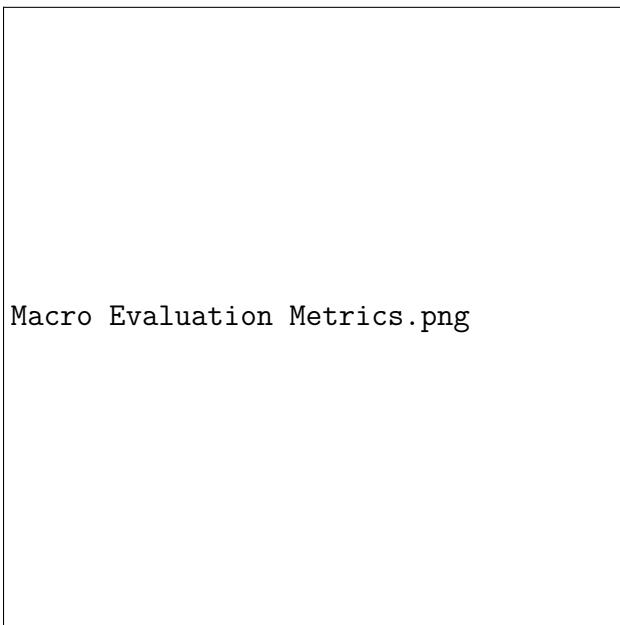
*Average F1 Score by Discourse Dimension*

suggests that BERT suffers from a “support penalty” effect in class-imbalanced text classification tasks, struggling to maintain robustness in low-resource contexts.

In contrast, the DeepSeek model demonstrates a positive correlation with support ( $r = 0.72$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Specifically, as support gradually increases, its F1-score shows a marked improvement. This indicates that DeepSeek possesses superior stable generalization capabilities when confronting multi-label tasks characterized by long-tail distributions and semantic sparsity.

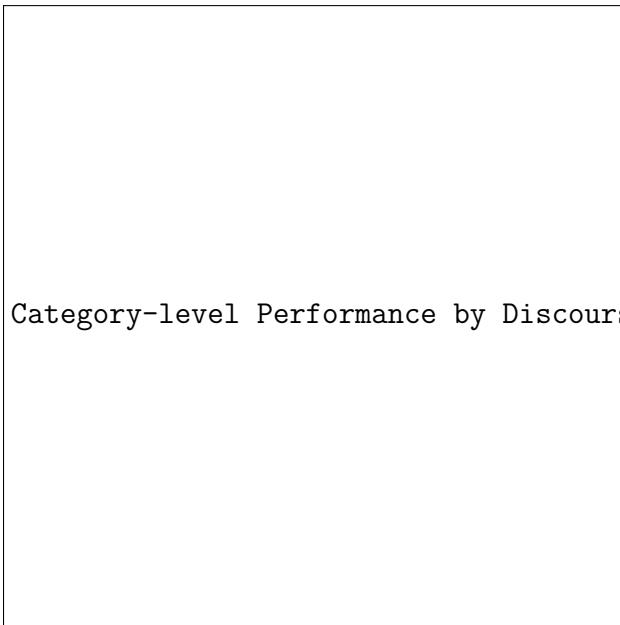
multiplicative superiority across all dimensions. For instance, within the “Sovereignty Claims” dimension, BERT’s F1-score was merely 0.038, whereas DeepSeek attained 0.126. Similarly, “National Positioning” and “Collective Mobilization” dimensions exhibited differences of 2.1 times and 1.9 times, respectively.

On a two-dimensional coordinate plot, the performance points of Logistic Regression (LogReg) are highly concentrated in the upper-right quadrant, signifying a “performance hotspot cluster” where high support coexists with high performance. LogReg’s F1-scores for dimensions such as the “Construction of Subjectivity” and “Shaping International Legitimacy” both exceeded



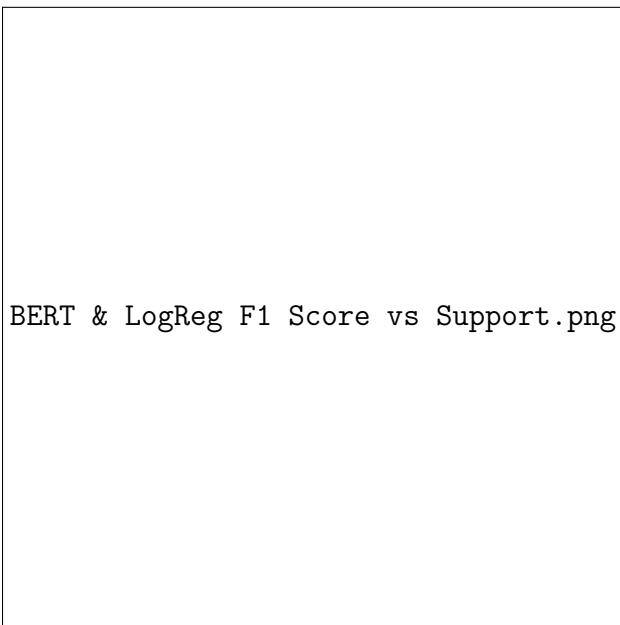
**Figure 2**

*Macro Evaluation Metrics*



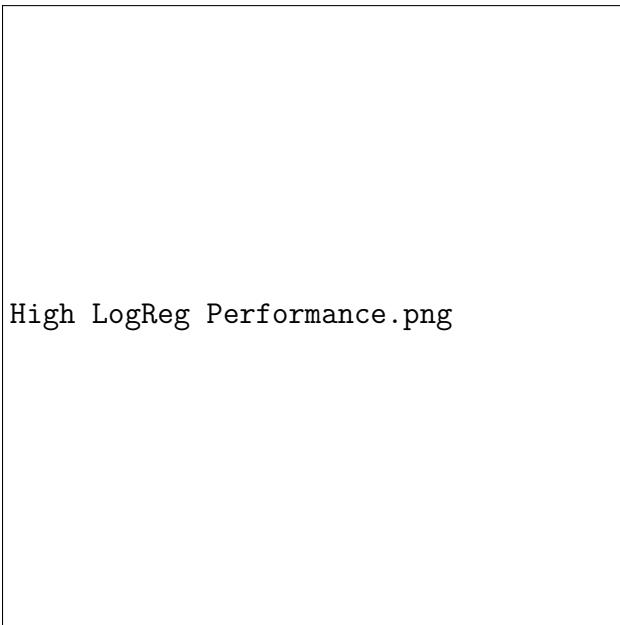
**Figure 3**

*Category-level Performance by Discourse Dimension*



**Figure 4**

*BERT & LogReg F1 Score vs Support*



**Figure 5**

*High LogReg Performance*

0.8, dominating 87% of the advantageous quadrant. Conversely, BERT's performance points are clustered in the low-performance region, with most F1-scores below 0.06, indicating its inability to achieve effective learning within semantically complex frameworks. It is noteworthy that even with high support, BERT consistently exhibited systemic inefficiency in categories primarily driven by emotional symbolism, such as "Quality of Life." BERT's Precision was 0.0104, Recall was 0.0625, and its F1-score was a mere 0.0178. In contrast, DeepSeek achieved F1-scores of 0.141 for "Shared Crisis Construction + Subjectivity Construction" and 0.123 for "International Legitimacy Formation + Subjectivity Construction," underscoring its significant advantage in these core semantic fields about national identity construction.

The comparative analysis unequivocally demonstrates that the DeepSeek model's overall performance in the national framework classification task significantly surpasses that of the conventional BERT model. This superiority is particularly pronounced in its ability to accurately identify low-frequency frameworks with complex textual features that also exhibit semantic proximity to other conventional frameworks, such as the "Shared Crisis Construction" framework and the "International Legitimacy Formation" framework.

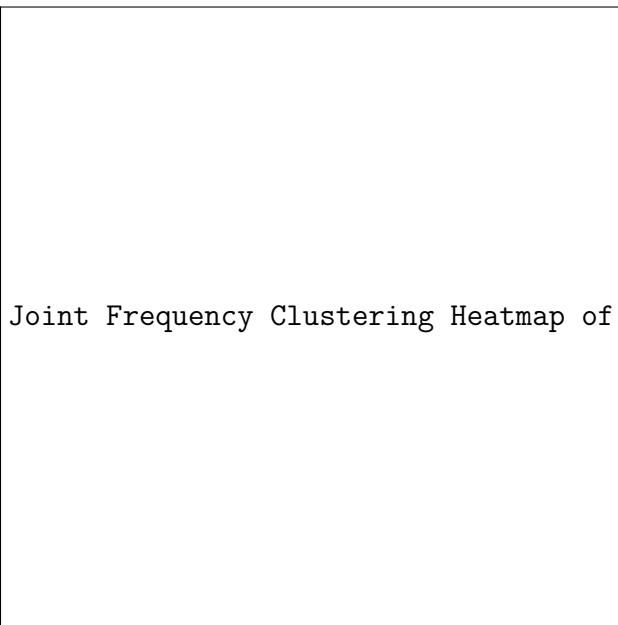
## Results

### **Latent Semantic Structures in Nationhood Framing: Cluster Patterns and Coupling**

#### **Tendencies**

An examination of the joint frequency and conditional probabilities between semantic frames (label1) and national identity constructs (label2) reveals a discernible pattern in how political actors in the 2024 Taiwan general election strategically employ discursive structures to construct notions of the "nation." Rather than emerging from random linguistic variation, these patterns reflect a deliberate alignment between rhetorical frames and identity connotations, suggesting a systematic logic in how national belonging is invoked and sustained within electoral discourse.

The heatmap visualizing co-occurrence intensities underscores this structure. Notably, the "Conflict" frame exhibits a strong statistical alignment with "Setting Common Enemy" and



**Figure 6**

*Joint Frequency Clustering Heatmap of Label1 and Label2 Frameworks*

“Constructing Common Crisis,” indicating a consistent reliance on antagonistic narratives to reinforce national cohesion. In particular, the frequency of “Setting Common Enemy” within the “Conflict” frame constitutes a substantial portion of its total usage, highlighting a strategy wherein the nation is constructed through the invocation of external threats. Such framings are instrumental in defining political boundaries, heightening group solidarity, and embedding national identity within the semantics of crisis and confrontation.

In contrast, the “Human Interest” frame is overwhelmingly associated with emotionally resonant meanings such as “Evoking National Pride” and “Mobilizing Shared Emotions.” The high conditional probabilities observed for these combinations suggest that emotional discourse plays a pivotal role in articulating the nation as an affective community. Here, national identity is not positioned primarily as a political institution but as a felt experience—anchored in pride, memory, and collective sentiment. This emotive articulation differs markedly from the procedural or legalistic logic often found in other frames.

Frames such as “Economic” and “Legality” are more strongly associated with meanings

like “Fostering Comparative and Competitive Awareness” and “Shaping International Legitimacy.” These combinations emphasize Taiwan’s institutional agency and global positioning, constructing the nation as a rational actor embedded in international norms and competitive structures. This framing foregrounds the technocratic dimensions of identity-building, in which sovereignty is expressed through metrics of economic performance and global alignment, rather than emotional appeal or antagonistic differentiation.

Candidate-specific patterns further confirm that these discursive configurations are not ideologically neutral. In the case of Hou You-ih, for example, the “Economic” frame frequently co-occurs with “Awakening Public Responsibility” and “Fostering Comparative Awareness,” reinforcing a policy discourse centered on developmentalism and civic ethics. Meanwhile, the consistent pairing of the “Conflict” frame with “Constructing Common Crisis”—with the latter reaching one of the highest observed frequencies—reveals an additional emphasis on public safety, social order, and the construction of latent threats. This configuration aligns with a conservative narrative tradition that prioritizes developmental pragmatism and institutional stability, while simultaneously invoking crisis semantics to consolidate collective identity through shared risk.

These findings demonstrate that national identity in Taiwan’s electoral context is not a stable referent but rather a discursive field continually shaped by the strategic deployment of semantic frames. The clustering patterns observed in the heatmap reinforce the notion that identity-related meanings are not evenly distributed but instead tightly coupled with particular rhetorical logics. In this context, the invocation of “nation” operates as both a symbolic resource and a site of contestation, where affect, legality, crisis, and development are selectively emphasized to resonate with divergent constituencies. Future analyses should extend this investigation to multimodal discourse, temporal dynamics, and emotional resonance across audience segments to further clarify how national identity circulates, stabilizes, and transforms within the evolving terrain of Taiwanese political communication.

Asymmetries in Frame and Identity Label Distributions: Revealing Discursive

Prioritization The proportional distribution of identity-related labels (label2) reveals a notable imbalance in how national identity is constructed across the political semantic spectrum. Among the most frequently invoked meanings are “Awakening Public Responsibility” ( $\approx 1.37$ ) and “Articulating Shared Vision” ( $\approx 0.89$ ), suggesting that electoral discourse tends to emphasize forward-looking appeals and civic participation as central pillars of national belonging. These labels indicate a strategy wherein the nation is imagined not merely as a static collective, but as an active moral community defined by responsibility and aspiration.

In contrast, labels such as “Nation Symbols Full of Metaphors” and “Constructing Collective Memory” appear with far lower frequency, with proportions below 0.25. This asymmetry implies a marginal role for symbolic and historical dimensions in the dominant narrative, pointing to a relative de-emphasis on deep-time cultural lineage or mythopoetic imagination of the nation. Instead, the dominant discursive thrust favors procedural, civic, and affective framings.

Notably, “Constructing Common Crisis” and “Setting Common Enemy” also feature prominently, particularly under conflict-related semantic frames. Their relatively high aggregate proportions suggest that antagonistic identity construction remains a persistent feature of the electoral field, where the nation is defined not only by what it is, but by what it is against. This confirms the co-existence of both integrative and oppositional mechanisms in the symbolic construction of the polity.

Overall, the distributional asymmetries across identity labels indicate a discursive prioritization of certain modes of nationhood over others. Political actors appear to favor aspirational and mobilizational narratives, embedding the nation within a logic of collective responsibility, emotional resonance, and competitive striving. Less emphasis is placed on memory, history, or symbolic abstraction—dimensions often associated with ethnosymbolic nationalism—thus reinforcing the interpretation that contemporary Taiwanese nationhood discourse is structured primarily around civic, pragmatic, and affective dimensions.

## Candidate-Specific Divergence in Nationhood Framing: A Statistical Test of Identity Strategies

The candidate-wise distribution of identity-related meanings reveals statistically significant divergences in how national identity is framed across political actors. The chi-squared test confirms that these differences are not random ( $\chi^2 = 25,866.98$ ,  $p = 0.0105$ ), while the Cramér's V value of 0.3095 suggests a moderate association between candidate identity and discursive preference. These results support the hypothesis that the construction of national identity in Taiwan's 2024 presidential campaign is shaped by ideologically distinct and strategically differentiated discursive repertoires.

Hou You-ih, representing the Kuomintang, demonstrates a pronounced emphasis on "Awakening Public Responsibility" (12.7%) and "Calling for Unity" (12.3%), coupled with notable use of "Articulating Shared Vision" (9.3%) and "Constructing Common Crisis" (8.3%). This discursive profile reflects a dual logic: on the one hand, a civic ethos emphasizing shared obligations and collective cohesion; on the other, a realist orientation grounded in risk management and crisis response. Notably, Hou's usage of "Setting Common Enemy" also reaches a non-negligible proportion, reinforcing the narrative of external threat as a resource for consolidating internal legitimacy. His comparatively lower emphasis on symbolic or memory-based constructions (e.g., "Nation Symbols Full of Metaphors," "Constructing Collective Memory") aligns with a pragmatic, future-oriented discursive style that avoids deep engagement with ethnonational symbolism.

In contrast, other candidates may show markedly different distributions—for instance, favoring emotive or historical framings—though these specifics would require direct comparison with Lai Ching-te and Ko Wen-je's respective profiles. The overall inter-candidate divergence suggests that national identity functions not as a universally shared discursive object but as a flexible rhetorical instrument, appropriated to align with broader ideological orientations and campaign strategies.

These findings reinforce the view that national identity construction is not merely shaped

by semantic frames in isolation, but also by who speaks and how they seek to mobilize publics. The statistical significance of cross-candidate variation points to the strategic nature of identity framing in Taiwan's electoral discourse and underscores the need to understand national identity not as a monolithic construct, but as a site of continual negotiation—structured by political interests, electoral imperatives, and divergent visions of the collective self.

### Divergent Framing Strategies among Candidates



**Figure 7**

*Lai's label1 Usage Trend*



**Figure 8**

*Lai's Label2 Usage Trend*

### **Lai Ching-te: National Sovereignty and High-Intensity Mobilization.**

***Early Stage: Establishing Identity and Governance Frames.*** In the early phase of his campaign, Lai Ching-te exhibited a relatively high frequency in employing frames associated with evoking national pride, constructing international legitimacy, and designating common adversaries. These discursive strategies, particularly visible in February, May, and July 2023, served to shape his public persona as an experienced leader with a strong sense of national identity and global awareness. His consistent emphasis on Public, Economic, and Policy frames (label1) underscores his pragmatic concern with governance and policy substance. From a DPM perspective, Lai's discourse actively engaged in Defining the National Self through appeals to

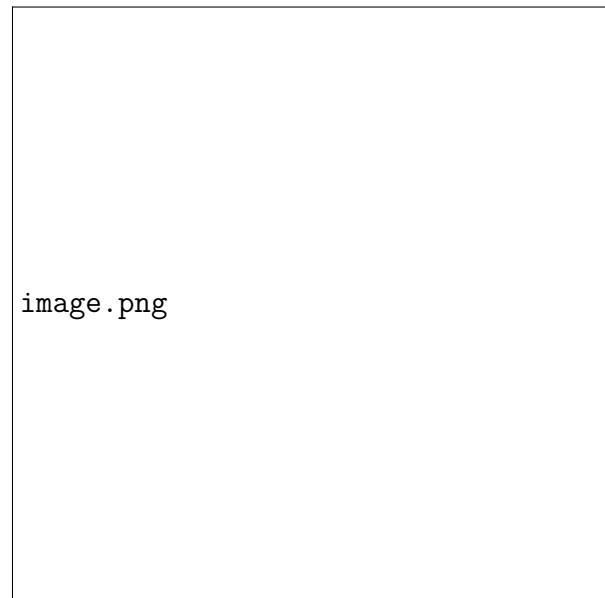
sovereignty and moral differentiation, and simultaneously contributed to Positioning the Nation Globally by asserting Taiwan's international legitimacy. Such framing bolstered his legitimacy as a defender of national interest and a competent administrator, laying the ideological groundwork for his subsequent campaign trajectory.

***Mid-Campaign: Escalation of Identity Mobilization and Victimhood Framing.*** In the middle phase of the election cycle, Lai sustained high frequencies in frames of national pride and common adversaries, reaching peaks in months such as July 2023 (see Figs. 1, 6, 7). This reflects a strategic shift toward more aggressive mobilization. The persistent deployment of Differentiated Identity, Comparative Competence, and Emotional Solidarity frames (label2) illustrates an intensified attempt to galvanize the electorate through discursive polarization. The rhetorical centering of victimhood functions as a potent emotional appeal—recasting critique as persecution and invoking moral solidarity. Within the Mobilizing the National Collective dimension, Lai's discourse fostered collective loyalty and internal cohesion through pathos-driven narratives.

***Final Stage: Explosive Mobilization and Assertion of Leadership Authority.*** As the campaign entered its final stretch, Lai's use of nearly all framing categories surged dramatically, marking an unprecedented escalation. This all-encompassing intensification of rhetorical effort aimed to maximize support mobilization, reiterate themes of national identity and external threat, and cast Lai as a resolute leader prepared for crisis. His discourse moved seamlessly across all three DPM dimensions—fortifying national selfhood, amplifying Taiwan's global positioning, and orchestrating collective mobilization through emotionally charged appeals and strategic narrative saturation.

#### **Ko Wen-je: Centrist Strategy and Adaptive Framing.**

***Early Campaign Stage: Low-Key Differentiation and Strategic Silence.*** In contrast, Ko Wen-je's early-stage framing was noticeably subdued across all categories, with minor fluctuations observed in March and May 2023—particularly regarding evoking national pride and emotional mobilization. This selective engagement may be interpreted as a calculated differentiation strategy, wherein discursive restraint served to challenge dominant political

**Figure 9***Ko's Label1 Usage Trend***Figure 10***Ko's Label2 Usage Trend*

grammars and project himself as a reformer or innovator. By resisting conventional nationalist appeals, Ko subtly performed an identity of nonconformity, catering to voters disillusioned with mainstream political discourse. This minimalist approach constitutes a Defining the National Self strategy through negation and discursive dissonance.

***Mid-Campaign Stage: Gradual Frame Introduction and Competency Construction.***

During the mid-campaign period, Ko began to engage more explicitly with frames related to international legitimacy (July 2023) and emotional mobilization (August 2023), although still at lower frequencies than Lai. This modest uptick signals a strategic recalibration aimed at broadening appeal and responding to rising electoral pressures. His measured introduction of select frames suggests an attempt to construct an image of competent, accountable governance, while retaining his innovator persona. This reflects a hybrid deployment of Positioning the Nation Globally and Mobilizing the National Collective, calibrated to balance credibility with ideological freshness.

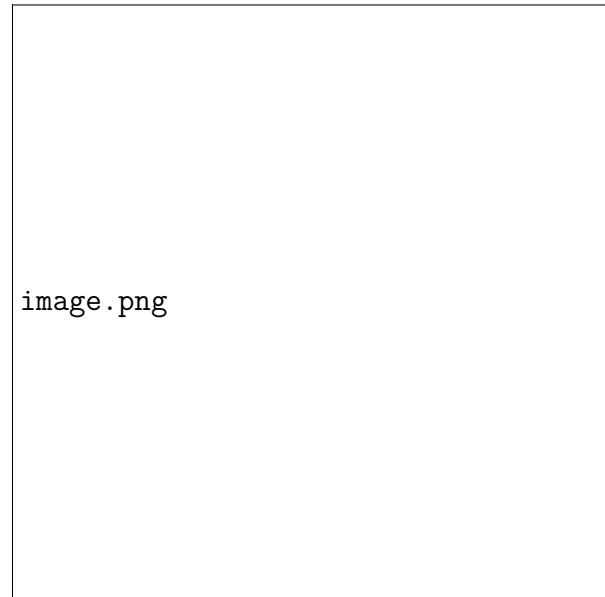
***Late Campaign Stage: Emotional Resonance and Value Clarification.*** In the campaign's final phase (November 2023 to January 2024), Ko significantly increased his use of

shared emotional mobilization, enemy construction, and international legitimacy frames, peaking in January 2024. This intensified framing strategy sought to invoke optimism and shared purpose, appealing to collective aspirations rather than divisive issues. The use of enemy construction here was less combative than Lai's, functioning instead to strengthen group cohesion and recast himself as a unifier. This marks a turn toward affective appeals under Mobilizing the National Collective, coupled with a more assertive stance in Defining the National Self as inclusive and reformist.



**Figure 11**

*Ho's label1 Usage Trend*



**Figure 12**

*Ho's label2 Usage Trend*

### **Hou You-ih: Pragmatic Governance and Livelihood-Oriented Discourse.**

***Early Campaign Stage: Low-Profile Pragmatism and Local Governance Focus.*** In the early campaign period, Hou You-ih consistently recorded the lowest levels of frame usage across categories, with minimal variation. This reflects a deliberate low-intensity strategy prioritizing his local governance credentials and pragmatic persona over ideological mobilization. His relatively low invocation of public, economic, and policy frames (label1)—with a notable later increase in the “public” category—underscores a calculated appeal to voters seeking stability and practical outcomes. This approach supports Defining the National Self through a lens of civic

problem-solving rather than ideological projection.

***Mid-Campaign Stage: Gradual Uptick and Thematic Concentration.*** Midway through the campaign, Hou exhibited a gradual increase in frames such as comparative awareness, emotional mobilization, and common adversary—particularly in July and August 2023. The growing presence of the “public” frame suggests a shift toward targeted issue focus. This marks a strategic recalibration intended to preserve his pragmatic image while modestly expanding his rhetorical repertoire. His framing began to lean into Positioning the Nation Globally and Mobilizing the National Collective, attempting to increase visibility and responsiveness to a more competitive political climate.

***Late Campaign Stage: Discursive Surge and Public-Centric Catch-Up Strategy.*** In the final stage of the campaign, Hou dramatically increased his use of multiple frames—including comparative identity, emotional mobilization, common adversary, and international legitimacy. Though still lower than Lai’s, the internal growth relative to his early campaign was striking. Notably, his “public” frame frequency reached its apex in January 2024. This surge represents a calculated catch-up effort, focusing on collective concerns, emotional resonance, and public welfare. By highlighting civic issues, Hou positioned himself as the candidate most aligned with the people’s everyday interests, anchoring his legitimacy in public-oriented pragmatism.

The comparative framing strategies employed by the candidates—such as Lai Ching-te’s emphasis on “national identity,” Ko Wen-je’s focus on “transformation,” and Hou You-yi’s concern for “people’s livelihood”—extend beyond mere articulation of policy positions. Each candidate meticulously calibrates their discursive choices to establish legitimacy, consolidate ideological projects, and implicitly or explicitly challenge their opponents. This constitutes a profound struggle over the very definition of political reality. Lai Ching-te’s discourse continuously projects established power and authority through the frequent invocation of frames such as “national pride,” “setting common enemies,” and “constructing international legitimacy.” This strategy aims to consolidate his position as a national leader and protector, thereby constructing a hegemonic understanding of the nation-state within mainstream narratives.

Ideologically, the frames he selects are closely aligned with a strong nationalism and sovereignty-oriented paradigm. He pragmatically modulates the intensity of his discourse—mobilizing comprehensively during critical campaign phases—to maximize ideological penetration without fundamentally deviating from core principles. Rhetorically, Lai cultivates ethos by emphasizing his role as a national leader and appeals emotionally by evoking “national pride” and defining “common enemies,” fostering collective loyalty and cohesion. His attention to “policy” and “economy” also implicitly appeals to logos, suggesting governance competence as the foundation of his envisioned nation.

Ko Wen-je’s discursive strategy, initially more subtle, gradually establishes a distinctive form of authority by challenging existing structures and proposing an alternative national vision. The increase in frames related to “emotional mobilization” and “international legitimacy” during later stages signifies his attempt to build a legitimacy grounded in progressivism and inclusivity. Ideologically, his discourse resonates with a progressive and centrist vision, seeking to open a discursive space for the nation beyond traditional political cleavages. His adaptive framing reveals careful calculation aimed at enhancing the appeal and persuasiveness of his ideology to a broader electorate. Rhetorically, Ko shapes his character as an innovator and unifier through the frame of “transformation,” employing emotional mobilization to evoke hope and resonance, thereby appealing to pathos; simultaneously, his emphasis on “transformation” also subtly invokes logos.

Hou You-yi’s approach attempts to anchor his power base in addressing practical public issues, as evidenced by the explosive increase in the use of various frames centered on “public” topics in later phases. This represents an effort to gain discursive influence by positioning himself as a pragmatic problem solver who delivers tangible benefits to the nation. Ideologically, his frames—emphasizing “stability,” “people’s livelihood,” and “public issues”—resonate with pragmatism and a traditional conservative conception of the nation. The significant variation in his discourse frequency indicates responsiveness to shifting public opinion and competitive dynamics, aiming to consolidate ideological foundations through focus on concrete livelihood concerns. Rhetorically, Hou constructs his ethos as a pragmatic resolver by embodying “stability”

and focusing on “public” issues; he appeals to pathos by eliciting public sympathy through these concerns and to logos by underscoring practical solutions’ impact on citizens’ well-being.

### **Findings**