

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

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August 1, 2025

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agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### 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-strait and international discussions. Lastly, we find that antagonistic framing organises multiple intersecting axes of othering, including cross-strait, 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.

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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-Strait 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-Strait 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.

### **Political Framing in Nations**

In the English context, nation is often understood as a nation-state. Mainstream academic research, particularly within modernist and constructivist theories of the nation, focuses on its inherent “constructive” features. This perspective examines how a nation is ideologically

imagined and historically constructed. For instance, Benedict Anderson (1991) posits that a nation is an “imagined community”, emphasizing that its existence is not based on objective reality but rather on a deeply shared sense of comradeship forged through common language, historical narratives, and cultural symbols. From a modernist viewpoint, Ernest Gellner (1983) asserted that nationalism precedes the nation, actively shaping and homogenising cultures to construct national identities. Conversely, Anthony D. Smith’s (1986) ethnosymbolism highlights the intrinsic links between national identity and pre-modern ethnicity, arguing that nations are rooted in shared myths of ancestry, historical memories, and cultural traits. These theoretical perspectives collectively illuminate the distinctions and connections between nation (as a collective identity), state (as a political entity with sovereign jurisdiction), and ethnicity (as a cultural or ancestral grouping). This understanding lays a crucial groundwork for comprehending nation construction within the specific context of Taiwan. Within this tradition, the nation is no longer viewed as a natural, eternal aggregation of people but rather as a “cultural mask” in state-building and a political tool for identity formation.

The complexity of nation intensifies when translated into the Chinese linguistic context, where it frequently carries a duality (Ning, 1995), often rendered as “minzu” and “guojia”. This “minzu-guojia” tension forms the core of conceptual ambiguity. Historically, the term “minzu” was introduced to China via Japan, initially imbued with a racial or genealogical connotation, as seen in the early Republic’s concept of the “Zhonghua Minzu”, which aimed at integrating diverse ethnic groups into a modern state (Duara, 2003). However, over time, particularly within the discourse of the Chinese nation-state, “minzu” has evolved to emphasize cultural attributes and a transnational quality distinct from the political entity of the “guojia”. This linguistic ambivalence creates fertile ground for political discourse, allowing the meaning of nation to be flexibly interpreted and instrumentalized to serve various identity-building strategies in specific contexts. Building upon the polysemy of the nation concept, it’s crucial to further dissect the dimensions of identity constructed around it. Academic discourse typically differentiates between ethnic identity and civic/political identity. Ethnic identity primarily

revolves around shared culture, ancestry, historical memories, and a sense of communal belonging, often characterized by more exclusive boundaries and a sense of belonging built upon an “us versus them” dichotomy. In contrast, civic/political identity emphasizes adherence to specific political systems, constitutional principles, and shared civic rights and obligations. Its boundaries are generally more inclusive, with belonging derived from a commitment to common political aspirations and institutions.

In Taiwan, these two identity dimensions exhibit complex overlaps and potential conflicts. The process of democratization in Taiwan since the 1990s has been accompanied by a growing prevalence of Taiwanese identity (Corcuff, 2021). This evolving identity increasingly incorporates not only historical and cultural ethnic sentiments but also a strong political allegiance to Taiwan’s democratic system, thereby sharply contrasting with a mainland “Chinese identity” . This dynamic significantly influences political polarization during elections and shapes cross-strait relations.

Moreover, the role of language in identity construction is paramount. Linguistic constructivism and discourse theory, particularly the frameworks of Fairclough’s (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Laclau & Mouffe’s (1985) discourse theory, provide critical tools for understanding how political language shapes social reality and collective identity. Fairclough’s CDA posits language as a form of social practice that both reflects and constitutes social structures and power relations. His three-dimensional framework analyzes texts at the micro-level, discursive practices at the meso-level, and their broader social implications at the macro-level. Laclau & Mouffe’s theory posits that social reality is discursively constructed, where meaning is formed through chains of signifiers and signifieds. They introduce the concept of floating signifiers, whose meanings aren’t fixed, becoming sites where different discourses compete to impose their desired interpretations. Political discourse, through strategies such as referencing, metaphor, and framing leverages the central signifier of nation to fill it with various signifieds. This process actively constructs, reinforces, or challenges specific ethnic and political identities, ultimately serving broader political objectives.



Within a comprehensive framework integrating postcolonial traditions and political linguistics, the nation transcends being merely an institutional vessel or an identity label. Instead, it functions as a “field of meaning” continuously constructed through discursive practices. This manifests both as an institutional discursive system of state sovereignty and national narratives, and as a reproduced logic of identity within social intermediary organizations, educational institutions, and political party propaganda. From a discursive perspective, the nation is a “resource to be appropriated” , its meaning not inherently fixed but rather a dynamic product constantly re-constructed and re-coded by various political actors through language, media, and policy texts. It is in this sense that the evolution of political identity in Taiwan should not be simplified into a singular path of “de-Sinicization” or “localization” . Instead, it must be understood as a multi-dimensional, strategic process of nation discourse construction, interwoven with institutional reforms, ethnic interactions, and global political contexts. Specifically, since the 1990s, driven by political party alternations, social movements, and educational policies, Taiwan has gradually forged a local identity discourse system distinct from the “中华民族” (Chinese nation) narrative (Liu & Liang, 2015; Zhong, 2020).

In the Taiwanese political context, the right to articulate the nation consistently remains a subject of intense competition. The interpretations of national identity by different political parties, social groups, and cultural intellectuals often manifest as a contest among multiple stances, such as “de-Sinicization” , “maintaining the status quo” , and “cultural connection” . This implies that the stability of the nation, as a product of linguistic practice, does not depend on the institutions themselves, but rather on the continuous process of discursive reproduction and the political will underpinning it. In other words, the construction of the nation is not a complete negation of old identities, but rather a “re-articulation” – a linguistic engineering process (Gellner, 1983). Through discursive choices, symbolic markers, and institutional design, it re-codes the original state form, injecting political connotations centered on Taiwanese societal experiences.

The formation and evolution of Taiwanese national identity is, first and foremost, a

process of discursive struggle. In this sense, political discourse is not merely a medium for transmitting political information, but also a mechanism for social action and interaction. It reshapes citizens' collective imagination of "who the nation is" by setting public agendas, defining problem boundaries, and shaping opposing groups (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 34; Wodak, 2001). In the Taiwanese context, the highly politicized symbols of "Taiwan and China" have undergone a narrative shift from representing orthodox China to an independent Taiwanese community (Chang & Holt, 2007). The traditionally dominant "China/Chinese" has gradually been supplanted by "Taiwan/Taiwanese", underlying a power struggle marked by the migration of political discourse's center of gravity.

Political discourse reinforces national boundaries by constructing a persistent "us–them" dichotomy: on the one hand, favorable rhetoric depicts "us" as legitimate and agentic; on the other, negative metaphors and derogatory labels portray the "other," thereby consolidating group identity at both emotional and value levels (Van Dijk, 1997; Hall, 1996; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). For example, after the 2014 Sunflower Movement, the Democratic Progressive Party frequently adopted a democracy Taiwan versus authoritarian China mirror narrative, whereas the Kuomintang countered with a peace through development frame to offset war risks; both camps relied on antagonistic story lines to seize agenda-setting power (Li & Cheng, 2020).

As an instrument of policy legitimation, political discourse enables actors to transform partisan interests into value claims acceptable to the public. Benoit's (2003) functional theory of political campaign discourse shows that candidates' policy appeals typically revolve around attack, defense, and acclaim strategies, rhetorically binding personal credibility to collective benefit. Using large scale event coding, Boydston et al. (2013) further demonstrate that candidates can link "agenda setting" to "frame substitution," keeping the competition focused on issues advantageous to them. In Taiwan's 2020 and 2024 presidential debates, President Tsai Ing-wen's team repeatedly cast "resisting China and safeguarding Taiwan" as a security issue—an archetypal frame substitution maneuver.

Political advertising, televised debates, and online live streams provide multiple diffusion

channels for such discourse. As early as McClure and Patterson's (1974) empirical study, exposure to campaign ads exhibited significant persuasive effects; later work confirmed that debates influence not only immediate viewers but also secondary audiences through interpersonal discussion, thereby amplifying discursive impact (Hellweg, Pfau, & Brydon, 1992; Cho, 2012).

Political discourse is also embedded within political action itself. Fairclough (2003) and Woods (2006) treat it as the latent structure of political events; candidates employ issue ownership and preemptive rhetorical strategies to establish cognitive advantage in media and public spheres (Petrocik, 1996). Taiwanese elections show that the side able to define livelihood, sovereignty, or reform frames early gains the upper hand in the ensuing opinion battle.

During the intense window of an election cycle, political discourse more conspicuously re-codes national identity symbols. Campaign communication involves not merely “what is promoted” (topics and values) but also “what that promotion comes to contain” (redefinitions of the national imagination, sovereign boundaries, and civic identity). Researchers have therefore proposed indicators such as frame sequencing and issue persistence to measure the life span and diffusion trajectories of particular discourses across an entire campaign (Ting & Chen, 2023). These tools provide a methodological fulcrum for tracking the long-term effects of political language on national identity.

In sum, political discourse constitutes the power arena in which Taiwanese national identity is constructed. Through symbolic translation, antagonistic coding, and policy legitimization, it permeates multiple levels—from elite mobilization to mass identification. Subsequent chapters will analyze 2023–2024 presidential debate transcripts and campaign advertisements using critical discourse analysis in combination with deep learning models to examine the dynamic interaction between political language and national identity.

### **Computational Approaches to Detect Frameworks**

With the advent of deep neural networks, researchers began employing convolutional and recurrent models to capture cross-sentence coherence and affective tension. Liu (2021) proposed a hybrid CNN that embeds weighted Word2Vec vectors, greatly improving detection of

metaphorical political rhetoric; Chung and Yang (2019) applied a Bi-LSTM-CRF sequence model to enhance accuracy in predicting complex inter-sentential logic, laying the groundwork for tracking frame evolution.

The rise of pretrained transformers has profoundly shifted the research paradigm. BERT and RoBERTa-based architectures enable deep semantic representation while attention visualizations reveal latent ideological structures. Analyzing Taiwanese election coverage, Liu Tao (2022) leveraged multi-head attention to extract key cues such as “transitional justice” and “cross-strait relations,” and SHAP analysis exposed narrative divergences among media outlets. Hsieh et al. (2023) introduced a dynamic lexicon alignment mechanism to address temporal drift in political terminology, ensuring consistent recognition of “Republic of China” versus “Taiwan” identity labels.

Given the high cost of supervised annotation, few-shot and self-supervised approaches are gaining traction. Chen (2024) achieved a macro F1 above 0.82 on only 1,000 labeled instances by applying a DeBERTa prompting framework, demonstrating promise for fine-grained frame classification.

Although current models can perform cross-period and cross-media identification and trace discursive evolution, most remain text-centric and have yet to integrate the breadth of multimodal political discourse. Introducing causal models offers a pathway to disentangle links among major events, national identity discourse, and voter attitudes. Such methods enhance understanding of frame transmission mechanisms while informing policy effect evaluation and campaign strategy.

Overall, computational modeling of Taiwanese national identity discourse shows a clear trajectory: from shallow features to deep semantics, from single to multi-modality, and from fully supervised toward self and few-shot learning. This methodological evolution not only keeps pace with technological innovation but also widens our grasp of textual structures and semantic strategies in identity construction, laying a robust theoretical and technical foundation for future cross-temporal and cross-platform comparative research.

## **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.

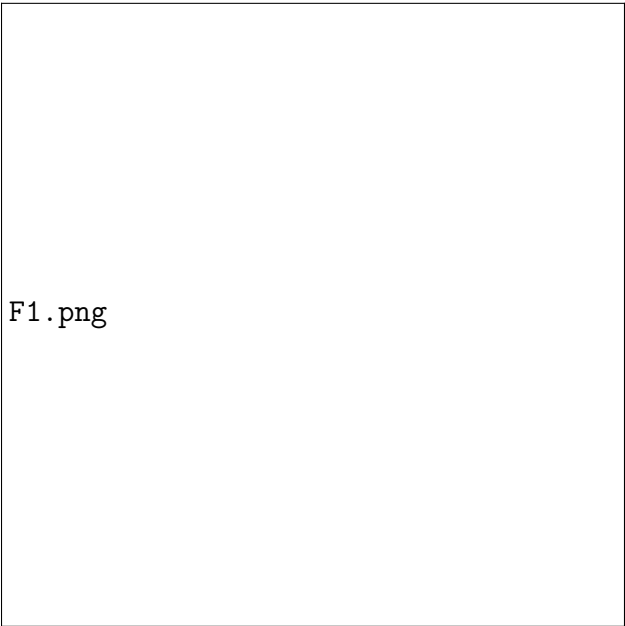
The trained model was subsequently deployed for prediction tasks on the validation set, generating a confusion matrix and classification report. Overall, the system successfully accomplished the end-to-end multi-label text classification task; however, accuracy remains to be enhanced, primarily constrained 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 suggests that BERT suffers from a "support penalty" effect in class-imbalanced text classification tasks, struggling to maintain robustness in low-resource contexts.

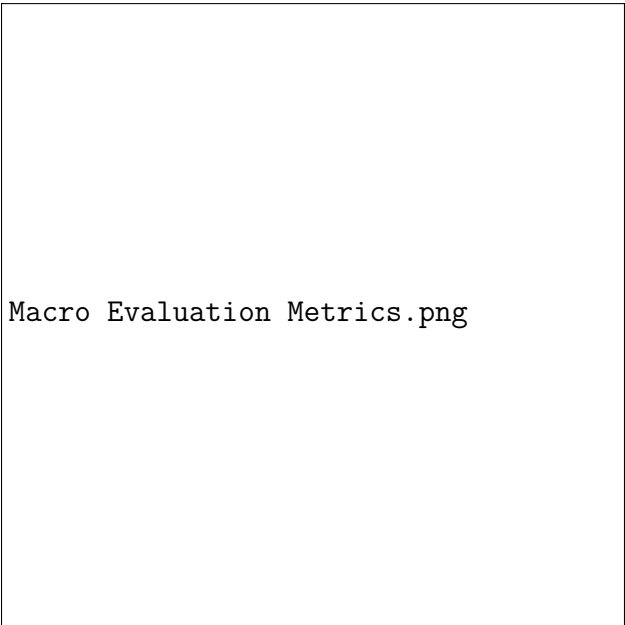
In contrast, the DeepSeek model demonstrates a positive correlation with support ( $r = 0.72$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Specifically, as support gradually increases, its F1-score shows a marked improvement. This indicates that DeepSeek possesses superior stable generalization capabilities when confronting multi-label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

multiplicative superiority across all dimensions. For instance, within the "Sovereignty

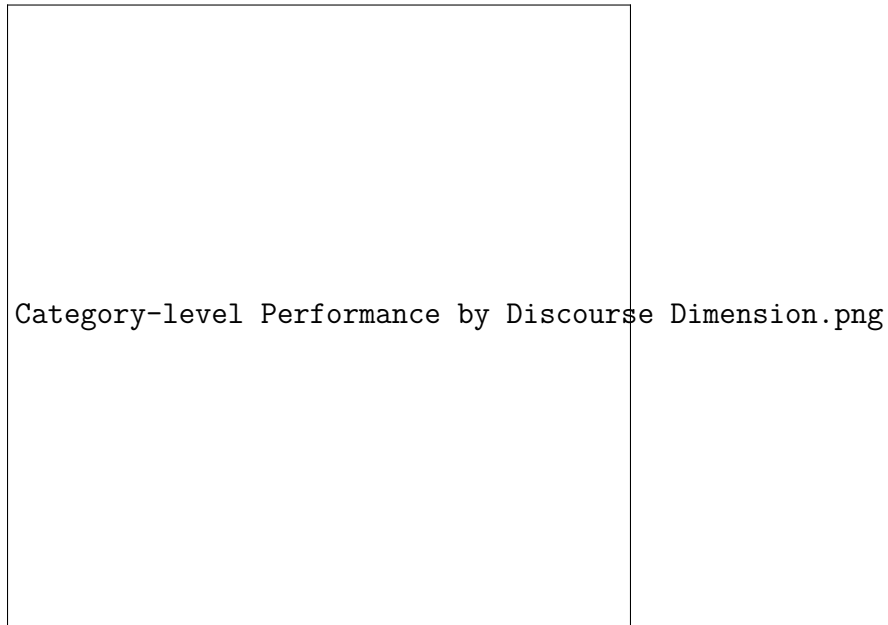




**Figure 1**  
*Average F1 Score by Discourse Dimension*



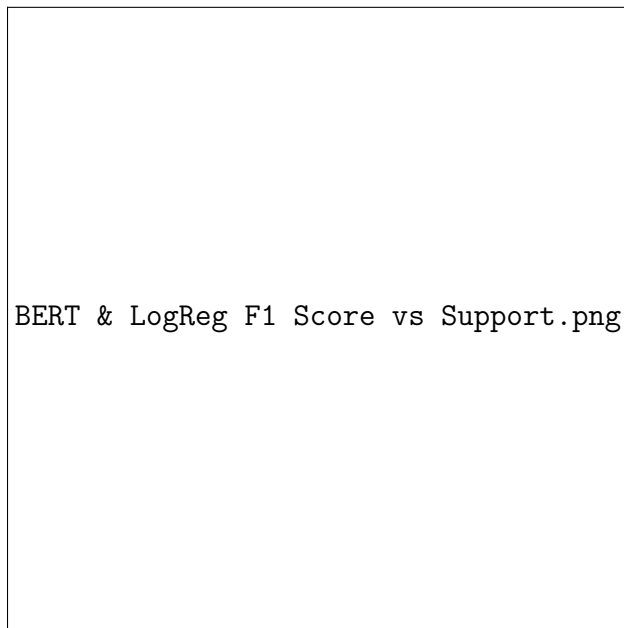
**Figure 2**  
*Macro Evaluation Metrics*

**Figure 3**

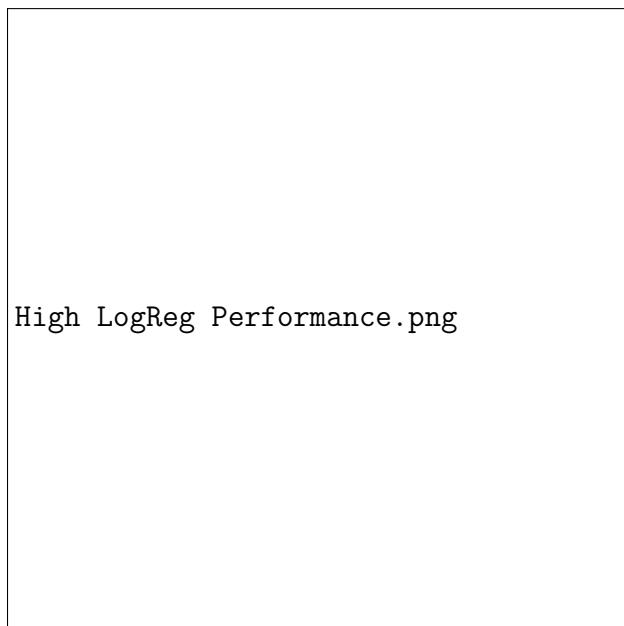
*Category-level Performance by Discourse Dimension*

"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 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

**Figure 4**

*BERT & LogReg F1 Score vs Support*

**Figure 5**

*High LogReg Performance*

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.

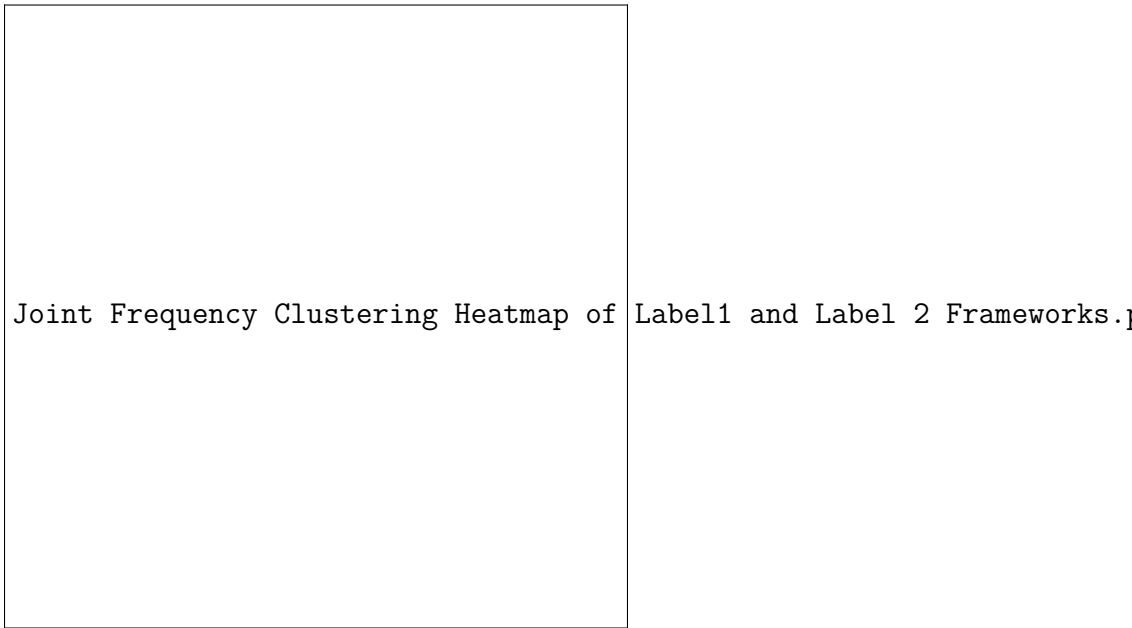
## **Results**

### **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 "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

**Figure 6**

*Joint Frequency Clustering Heatmap of Label1 and Label 2 Frameworks*

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**

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



**Figure 7***Lai's label1 Usage Trend***Figure 8***Lai's Label2 Usage Trend*

***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

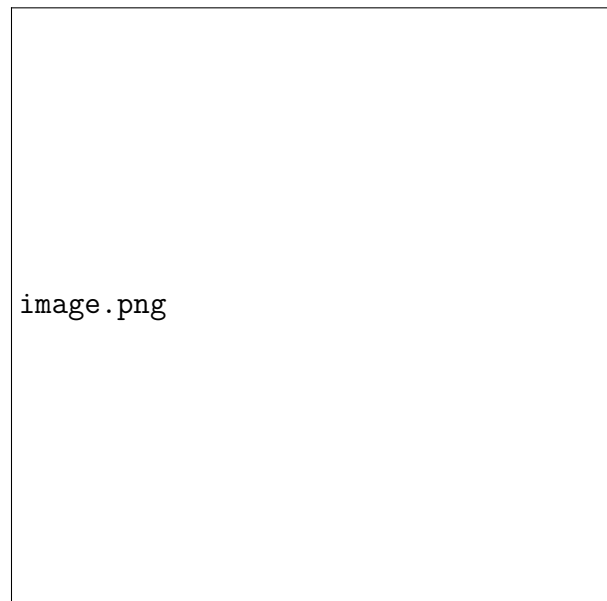
a strategic shift toward more aggressive mobilization. The persistent deployment of Differentiated Identity, Comparative Competence, and Emotional Solidarity frames (label2) illustrates an intensified attempt to galvanize the electorate through discursive polarization. The rhetorical centering of victimhood 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.



**Figure 9**

*Ko's Label1 Usage Trend*



**Figure 10**

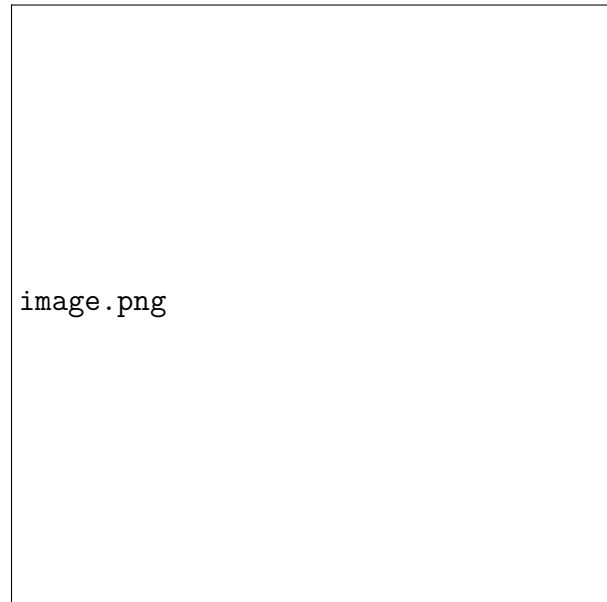
*Ko's Label2 Usage Trend*

**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 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