Framing the Nation: Discourse of National Identity Construction in the Taiwan RegionAn Analysis of 2024 Electoral Campaign Texts

∗Junyu Jiang[1] and Zhuoling Li[2]

Communication University of China[1]

Nankai University[2]

August 1, 2025

Author Note

∗These authors contributed equally to the work.

Junyu Jiang, Faculty of International Media, Communication University of China, juj013@ucsd.edu;

Zhuoling Li, Zhou Enlai School of Government, Nankai University, 2112511@mail.nankai.edu.cn.

Abstract

Framing the Nation: Discourse of National Identity Construction in the Taiwan RegionAn Analysis of 2024 Electoral Campaign Texts

In contemporary political landscapes, national identity stands as a profoundly influential and often contested construct, particularly salient within democratic electoral contests where the collective self-understanding of a polity is continuously negotiated. Far from being a primordial or fixed entity, the nation is widely understood within constructivist theories as an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991), actively shaped and sustained through shared narratives and symbols. Scholars such as Gellner (1983) and Smith (1986) further elaborate on how nationalism constructs nations, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between cultural heritage, historical memory, and political mobilization. Central to this construction is framing theory, which posits that political discourse selectively highlights certain aspects of reality while downplaying others, thereby influencing public perception and shaping how issues are understood (Entman, 1993). In this light, political language becomes a potent instrument, not merely for communicating information, but for actively constructing and contesting the very fabric of national identity itself.

The complexity of this discursive construction intensifies significantly when the concept of nation enters the Chinese linguistic context. Here, its translation frequently carries a duality, often rendered as "minzu" (referring to an ethnic group or nationality) and "guojia" (referring to the state or country). This inherent "minzu-guojia" tension forms a core conceptual ambiguity, transforming the nation into a fluid "field of meaning" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) ripe for political interpretation and manipulation. This linguistic ambivalence creates an extensive discursive space within which political actors can strategically imbue the nation with varying connotations, touching on sensitive issues of sovereignty, ethnic belonging, and collective destiny to serve diverse identity-building agendas.

Although previous scholarship has extensively examined the conceptual foundations of national identity, explored its qualitative manifestations in discourse, and analysed political communication strategies in various contexts, a notable gap persists. Few studies offer quantitative textual linguistic support for the structural stability of the framing strategies

employed in national identity discourse, particularly in highly dynamic electoral environments. Furthermore, systematic empirical analysis of how these framing strategies vary between different political stances, party affiliations, or in response to specific social events remains limited. This study addresses these shortcomings by uniquely focusing on the ambiguity arising from the translation of "nation" in the Chinese context.

This ambiguity is particularly pronounced in Taiwans political context, where historical legacies, evolving cross-Strait relations, and internal debates on collective identity converge to heighten the semantic stakes of nation-related discourse. The absence of a unified consensus on national affiliation has made the lexical boundaries between Minzu and Guojia especially porous. As a result, political actors across the spectrum often use this semantic flexibility to articulate competing visions of identity, legitimacy, and political future. In such a context, even subtle linguistic choices may signal broader ideological orientations or identity claims, thereby amplifying the symbolic weight of nation-related terms in public discourse.

We leverage a comprehensive data set that includes televised speeches, debates, media reports, and social media content from Taiwan's 2024 election cycle. By combining political communication theory with advanced natural language processing (NLP) techniques, our goal is to systematically analyse the underlying discursive patterns in the construction of national identity and identify the strategic differences in semantic and emotional expression employed by various political actors throughout a critical electoral period.

National identity, as a semantically saturated and discursively constructed concept, is continuously reshaped and contested through political language (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Within this discursive process, the framework operates as a fundamental mechanism by which political actors selectively emphasise, de-emphasise, or reconfigure specific facets of 'the nation' to produce, reproduce, or challenge particular visions of collective identity. Especially in electoral contexts, national identity discourse often serves as a rhetorical site through which deeper political logicsabout sovereignty, ethnicity, legitimacy, and historical continuityare obliquely encoded, thereby structuring how publics imagine their place within the polity.

Despite extensive theoretical elaboration on the discursivity of the nation, existing research has rarely examined whether the framing strategies underlying national identity discourse exhibit identifiable structural regularities or recurring configurations. Few studies have deployed systematic linguistic or computational analyses to test whether such rhetorical strategies follow discernible patterns across actors and contexts. To address this gap, we propose the following research question:

RQ1: In the discursive construction of nation as a political signifier, is there evidence of recurrent or structurally regular framing strategies?

An affirmative answer would suggest that national identity discourse is not simply contingent or improvised, but partially governed by underlying rhetorical logics that lend it internal coherence. In this view, while the signifier nation remains inherently fluid and contested, political actors may stabilise certain interpretations by deploying discursive mechanisms such as nodal pointscentral signifiers around which meanings coalesceand chains of equivalence, which link disparate signifiers under a shared ideological grammar (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

Yet such structures are not politically neutral. We hypothesise that the content and configuration of these framing strategies may differ significantly based on actors ideological orientations, party affiliations, and responsiveness to exogenous sociopolitical stimuli. This leads to our second research question:

RQ2: To what extent are national identity framing strategies differentiated by political ideology, party affiliation, or critical sociopolitical events?

To answer these questions, we curated a multisource corpus encompassing the entire 2024 Taiwanese presidential election cycle. The data set includes all televised campaign speeches and debates delivered between January 15, 2023, when Lai Ching-te assumed the chairmanship of the Democratic Progressive Party, and January 13, 2024, the date of the general election. Complementing this, we collected relevant media texts from three ideologically representative outletsLiberty Times, TVBS, and China Timesas well as all Twitter posts authored by the three major presidential candidates over the same period.

By integrating political communication theory with advanced Natural Language Processing (NLP), we aim to trace the production, transformation, and differentiation of national identity discourse across institutional, mediated, and personal political communication channels. We introduce a two-level annotation framework that distinguishes both issue-generic and nationalism-specific framing typologies, and employ few-shot learning via the DeepSeek large language model to classify framing strategies and affective.

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 (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 usthem 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. Benoits (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, Boydstun et al. (2013) further demonstrate that candidates can link agenda setting to frame substitution, keeping the competition focused on issues advantageous to them. In Taiwans 2020 and 2024 presidential debates, President Tsai Ing-wens team repeatedly cast resisting China and safeguarding Taiwan as a security issuean archetypal frame substitution maneuver.

Political advertising, televised debates, and online live streams provide multiple diffusion channels for such discourse. As early as McClure and Pattersons (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 legitimation, it permeates multiple levelsfrom elite mobilization to mass identification.

Subsequent chapters will analyze 20232024 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 BiLSTMCRF 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 nations internal identityits 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`
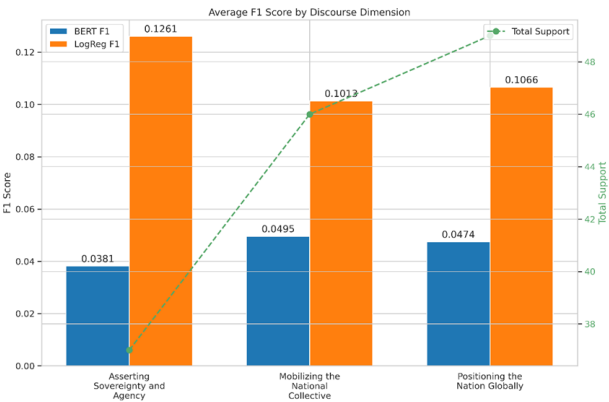
Evaluation Results and Comparative Analysis

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 4.68×10^{-5} to 1.92×10^{-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.
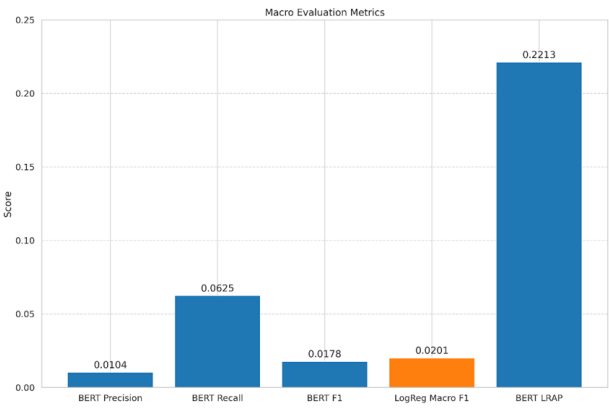
The trained model was subsequently deployed for prediction tasks on the validation set, generating a confusion matrix and classification report. Overall, the system successfully accomplished the end-to-end multi-label text classification task; however, accuracy remains to be enhanced, primarily constrained 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

Figure 1

Average F1 Score by Discourse Dimension

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.

Figure 2

Macro Evaluation Metrics

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.

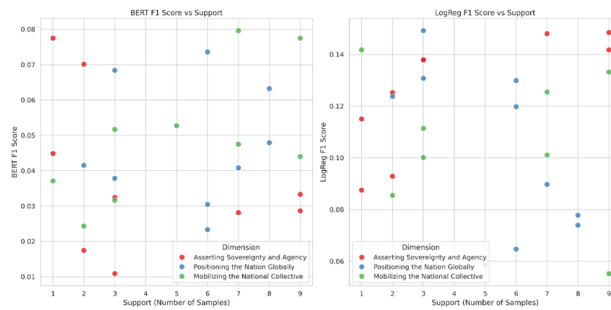multiplicative superiority across all dimensions. For instance, within the "Sovereignty

Figure 3
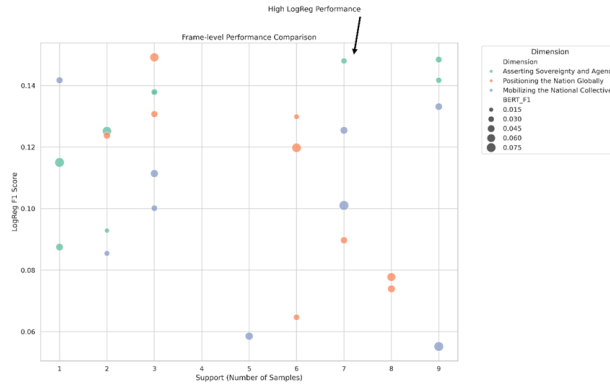
Category-level Performance by Discourse Dimension

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.

Figure 4

BERT & LogReg F1 Score vs Support

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

Figure 5

High LogReg Performance

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.
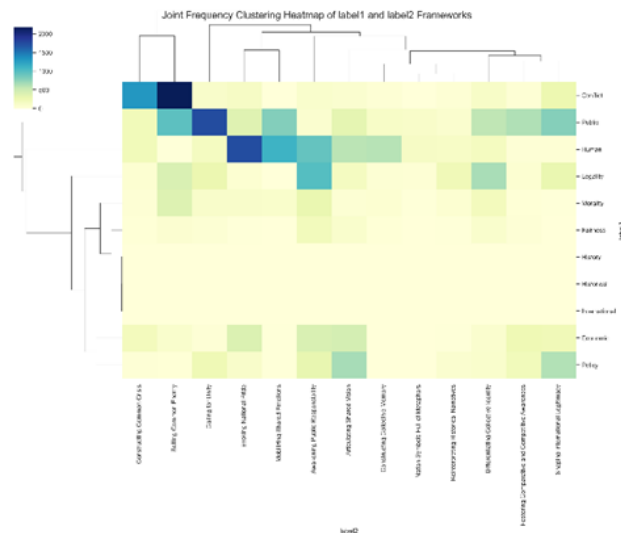
The comparative analysis unequivocally demonstrates that the DeepSeek model's overall performance in the national framework classification task significantly surpasses that of the conventional BERT model. This superiority is particularly pronounced in its ability to accurately identify low-frequency 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.

Figure 6

Joint Frequency Clustering Heatmap of Label1 and Label 2 Frameworks

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 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 experienceanchored 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 Taiwans 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 Crisiswith the latter reaching one of the highest observed frequenciesreveals 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 Taiwans 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 (1.37) and Articulating Shared Vision (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 abstractiondimensions often associated with ethnosymbolic nationalismthus 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 (š = 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 Taiwans 2024 presidential campaign is shaped by ideologically distinct and strategically differentiated discursive repertoires.
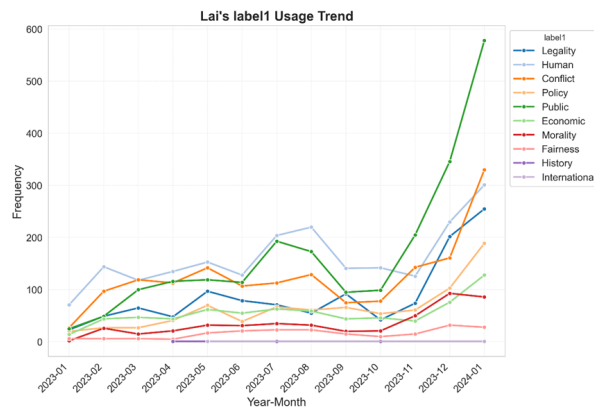
Hou You-ih, representing the Kuomintang, demonstrates a pronounced emphasis on Awakening Public Responsibility (12.7%) and Calling for Unity (12.3%), coupled with notable use of Articulating Shared Vision (9.3%) and Constructing Common Crisis (8.3%). This discursive profile reflects a dual logic: on 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, Hous 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 distributionsfor instance, favoring emotive or historical framingsthough these specifics would require direct comparison with Lai Ching-te and Ko Wen-jes 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
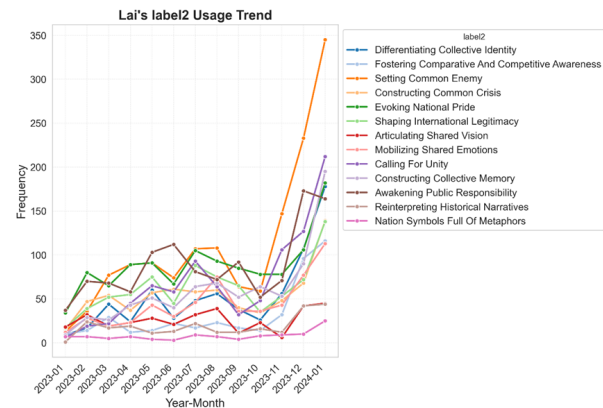
by semantic frames in isolation, but also by who speaks and how they seek to mobilize publics. The statistical significance of cross-candidate variation points to the strategic nature of identity framing in Taiwans electoral discourse and underscores the need to understand national identity not as a monolithic construct, but as a site of continual negotiationstructured by political interests, electoral imperatives, and divergent visions of the collective self.

Divergent Framing Strategies among Candidates

Figure 7

Lai's label1 Usage Trend

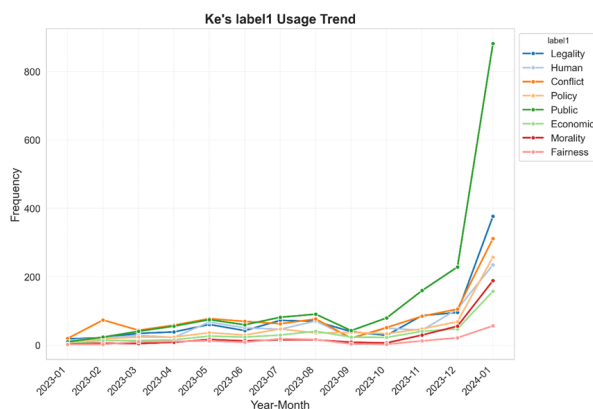

Figure 8

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 Taiwans international legitimacy. Such framing bolstered his legitimacy as a defender of national interest and a competent administrator, laying the ideological groundwork
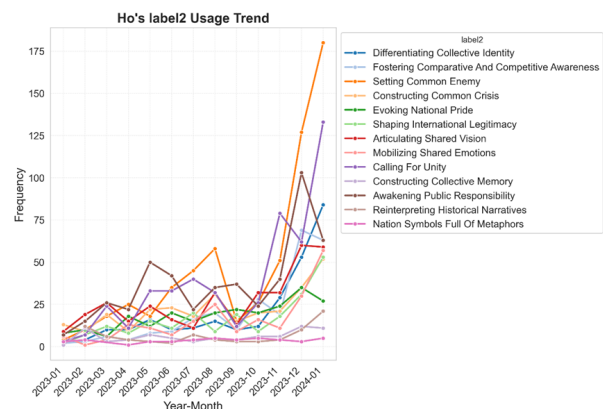
for his subsequent campaign trajectory.

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 appealrecasting critique as persecution and invoking moral solidarity. Within the Mobilizing the National Collective dimension, Lais 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 dimensionsfortifying national selfhood, amplifying Taiwans 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-jes early-stage framing was noticeably subdued across all categories, with minor fluctuations observed in March and May 2023particularly 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 campaigns 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 Lais, 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.
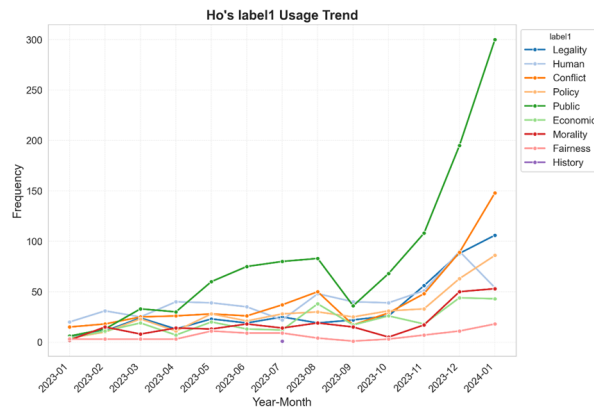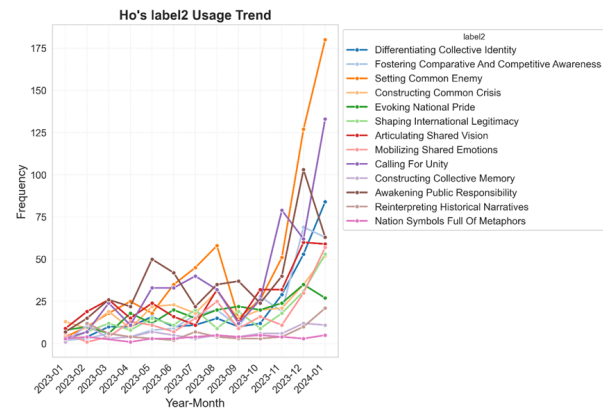
Figure 11

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 categoryunderscores 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 adversaryparticularly 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 framesincluding 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 peoples everyday interests, anchoring his legitimacy in public-oriented pragmatism.

The comparative framing strategies employed by the candidatessuch as Lai Ching-tes emphasis on national identity, Ko Wen-jes focus on transformation, and Hou You-yis concern for peoples livelihoodextend 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-tes 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 discoursemobilizing comprehensively during critical campaign phasesto 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-jes 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-yis 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 framesemphasizing stability, peoples livelihood, and public issuesresonate 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