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Title: "Fine-Tuned Language Models in Political Science: Understanding Party and Candidate Communication"

Abstract:

Two recent studies leverage transformer-based classification to uncover insights into political communication and its implications for party competition and legislative leadership. The first study examines the use of nostalgic rhetoric in European party politics, analysing 1,648 party manifestos across 24 democracies using a range of text analysis approaches, from dictionaries to fine-tuned transformer models. After comparing and validating the classification approaches, the empirical analysis reveals that nostalgia is predominantly featured in manifestos of culturally conservative parties and varies by region and issue. The second paper explores the connection between campaign communications and legislative leadership in Japan, using a transformer-based machine learning model to analyse over 46,900 statements from candidate manifestos. It finds that candidates who emphasise certain policy issues during campaigns are more likely to secure legislative posts in those areas, highlighting the predictive power of campaign rhetoric on legislative activities. Both papers showcase the application of transformer-based classification to understand the impact of political communication on legislative leadership and the strategic use of nostalgia in party competition. The presentation closes with a brief discussion of advantages and limitations of using transformer-based machine learning in the social sciences.