

Temples of Democracy

VALUES, THREATS AND LEVERS

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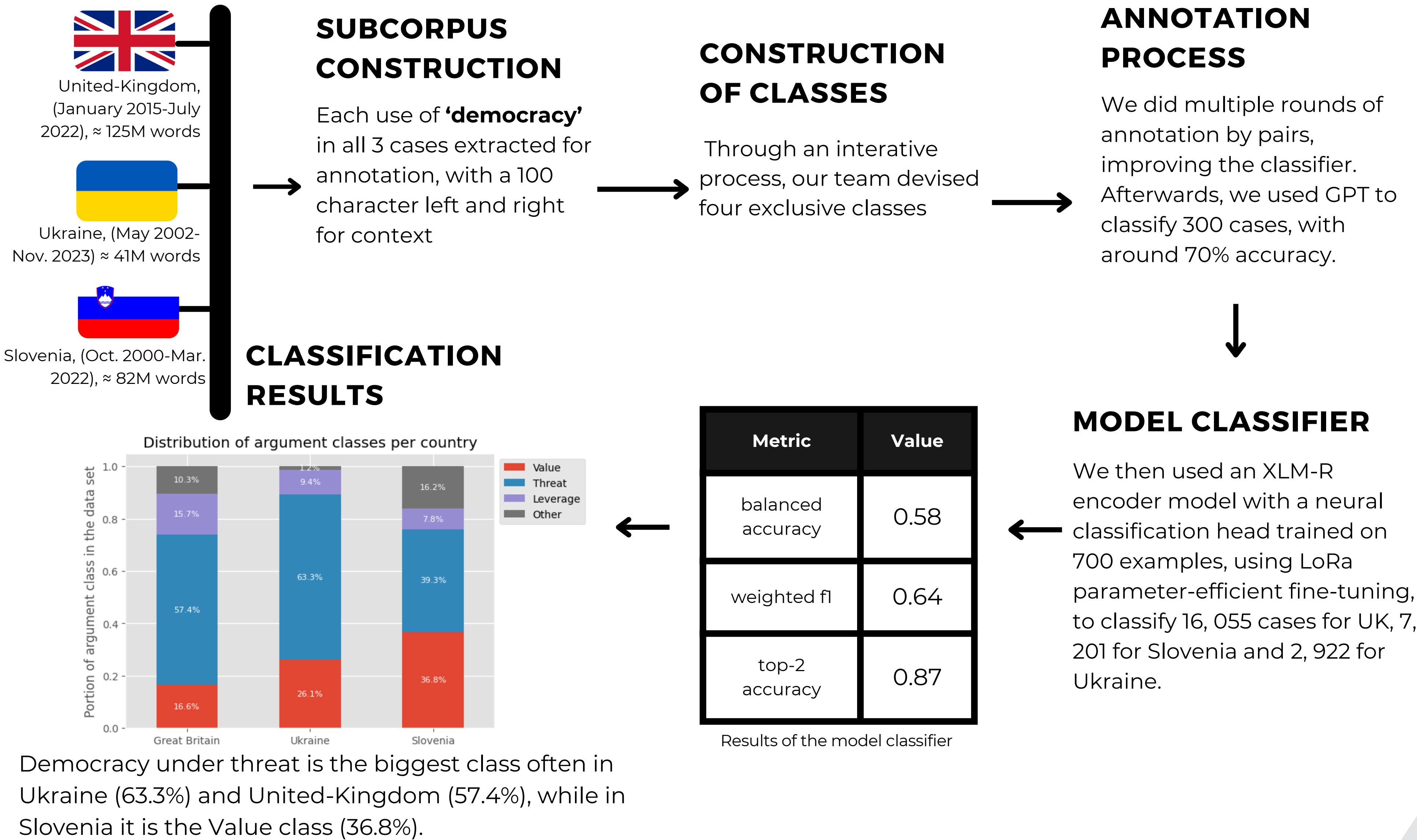
1. Introduction

Parliament is often referred to as the temple of democracy. However, studies on how people understand and perceive democracy rarely observe politicians' conceptualizations. Our study focuses on the UK, Slovenian, and Ukrainian parliament members, and suggests that investigating their rhetorical use of the term democracy supplements earlier research on the conceptualization of democracy.



3. Data & Methodology

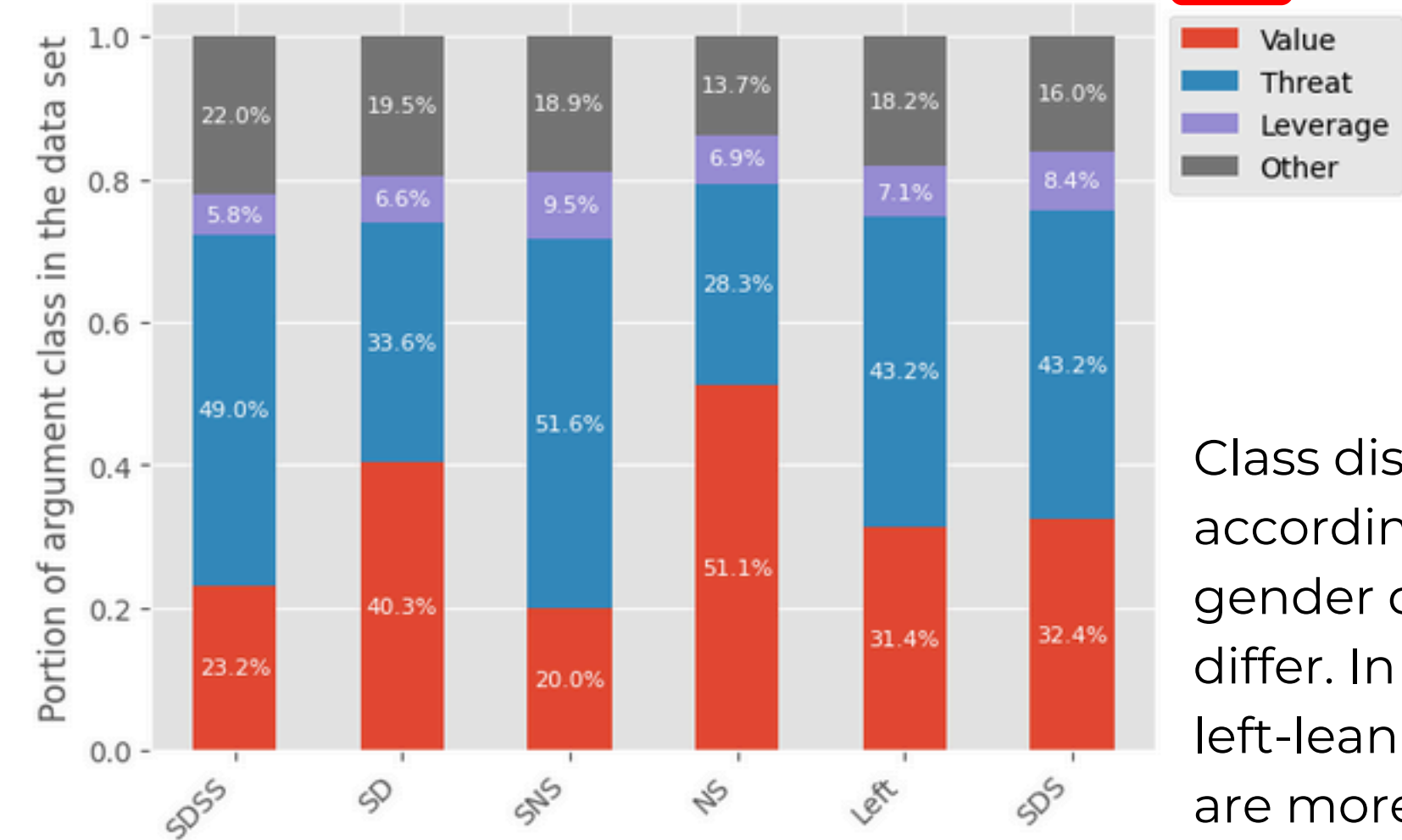
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5. Analysis

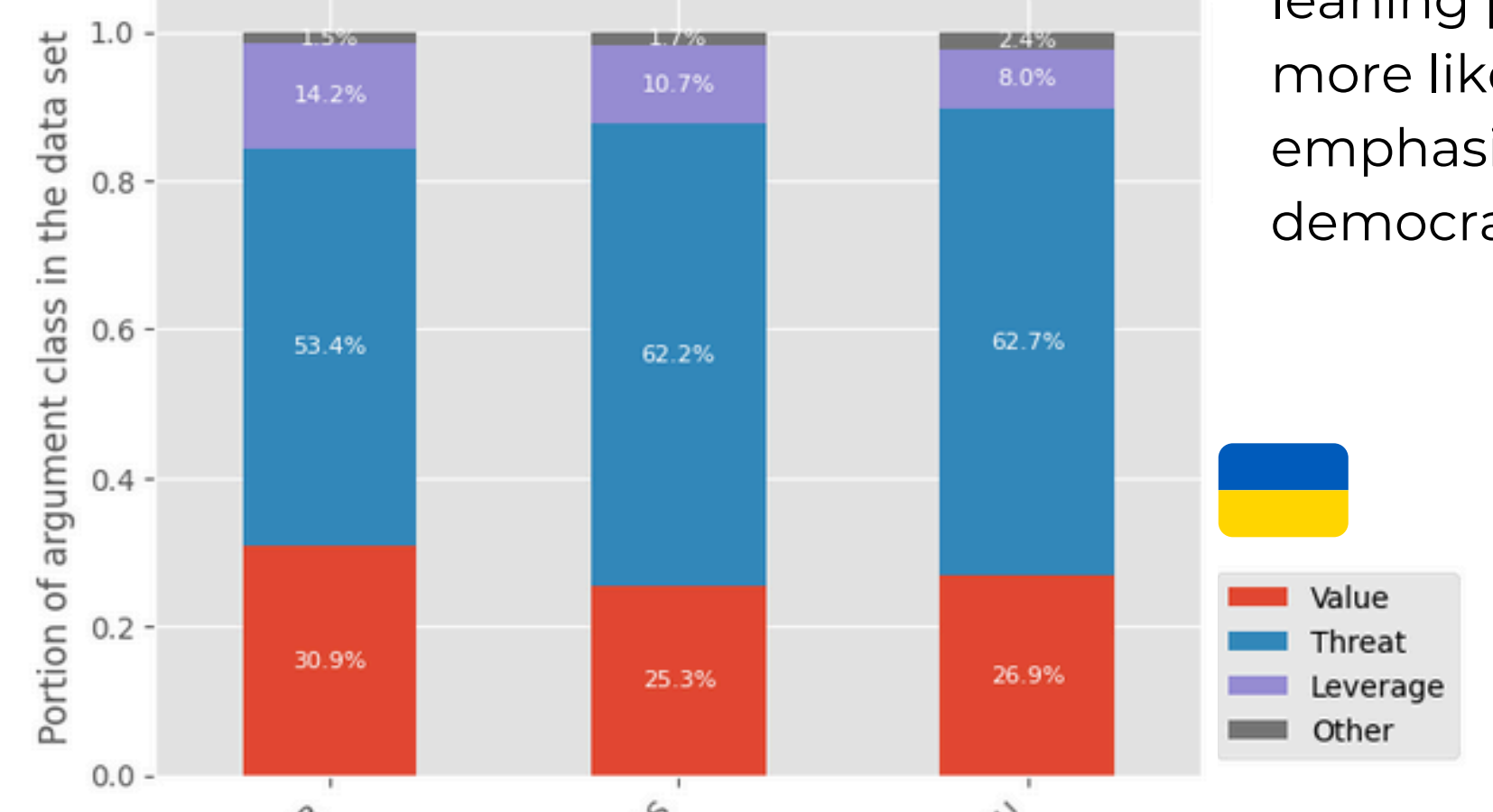
BREAKDOWN BY PARTY

Argument classes, selected parties in Slovenia



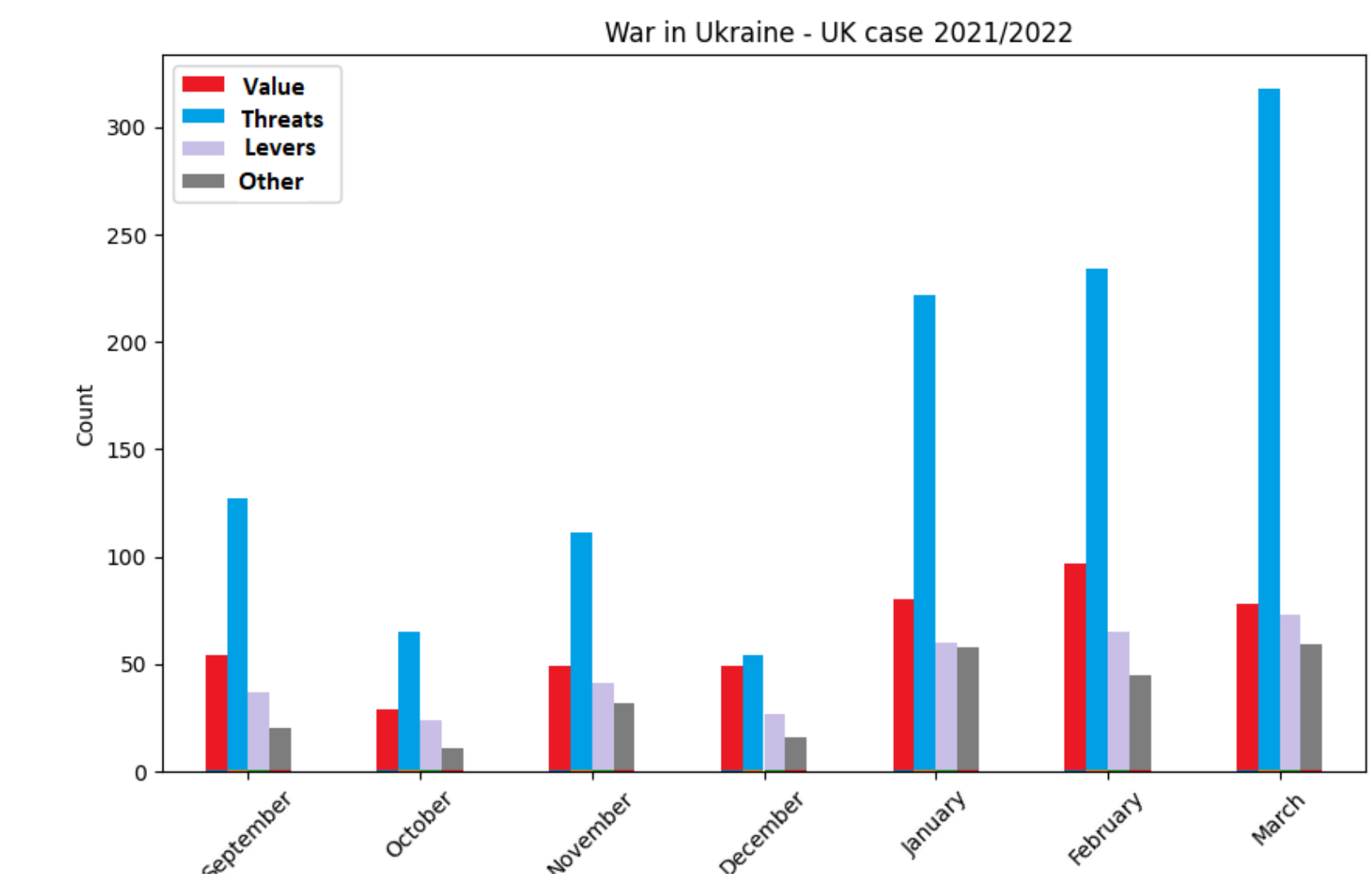
Class distribution according to gender did not differ. In general, left-leaning parties are more likely to talk about threats to democracy, whereas right-leaning parties are more likely to emphasize democratic values.

Argument classes, selected parties in Ukraine



CLASS EXAMPLES

- PROB: 97.34, CLASS: VALUE** Kofi Annan, Ukraine: "There is a growing understanding that properly implemented democracy is the best guarantee of ensuring the practice of free debate."
- PROB: 48.7, CLASS: THREAT** Frances D'Souza, UK: "Widespread famine has also occurred as a result of the failure of democracy. Between 1959 and 1961, 20 million Chinese died following Mao Tse-Tung's industrial experiment."
- PROB: 94.0, CLASS: LEVERAGE** Sukić Nataša, Slovenia: "That's democracy for you apparently, to delete everything you don't like."



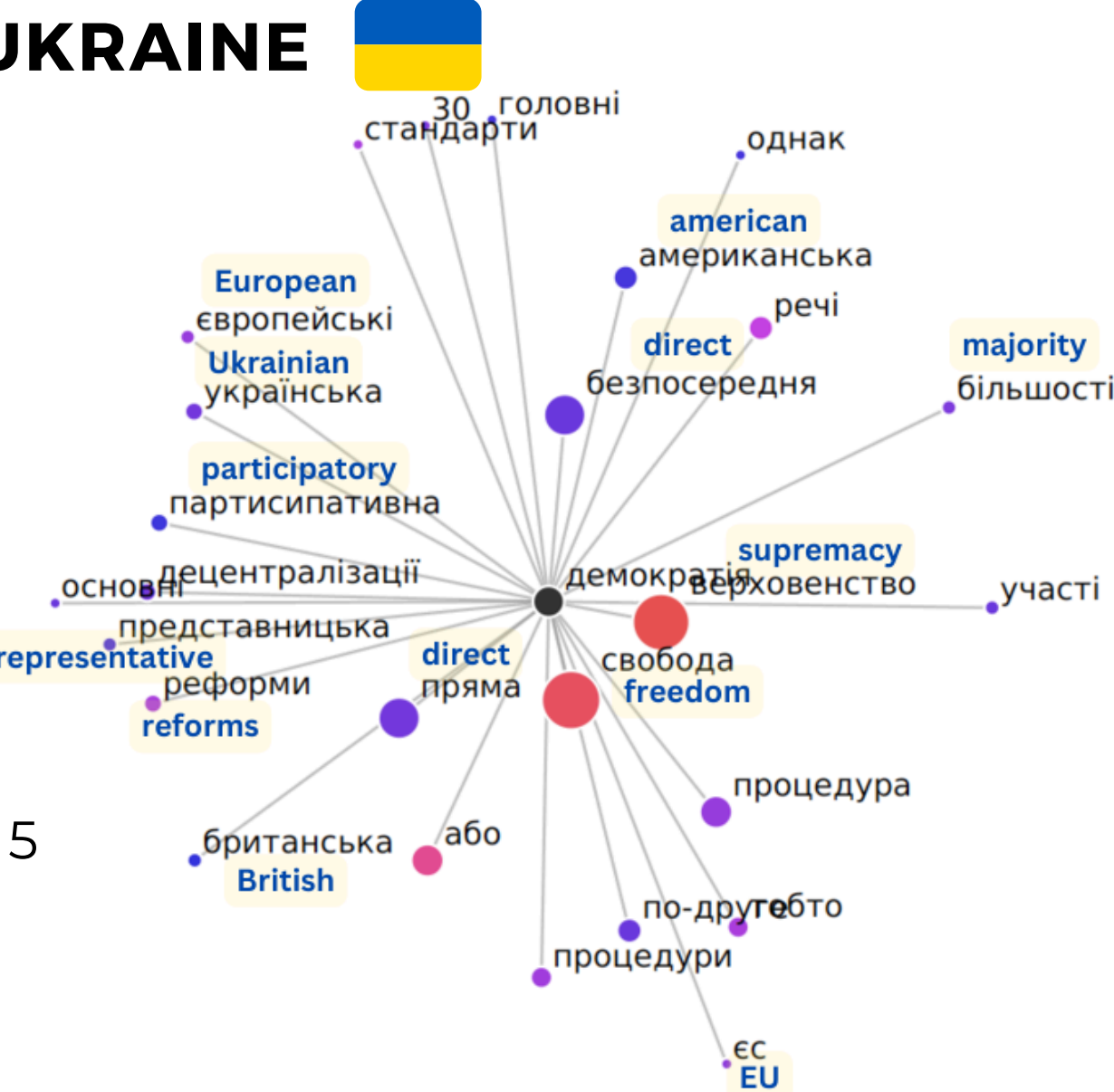
TIME SERIES

Threat to democracy was a rising trend with all three cases in the months leading to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This is particularly clear in the British case as this figure shows.

COLLOCATIONS, UKRAINE 'VALUES' CLASS

When Ukrainian politicians speak highly of democracy, they often mention the EU, the US and Britain. Freedom and supremacy (of law) are amongst the most relevant collocates.

MI ≥ 5.1 & Freq. (collocation) ≥ 5 & Log Dice ≥ 6 (or NaN)



2. Research questions

- 1.How is democracy conceptualized and used in the UK, Ukrainian, and Slovenian parliamentary speeches?
- 2.How can different ways of speaking about democracy be classified with a machine learning model?
- 3.How are our classes distributed according to party affiliation, country and gender?
- 4.Are some of our classes linked to the UK, Ukrainian, and Slovenian historical events?
- 5.What are the key topics and word distributions of the classes?

4. Classes

Democracy as a Value

Democracy is used as a normative principle, a primary value, or an absolute right, standing alongside human rights and freedom.

Democracy under Threat

Democracy is depicted as being under threat and, therefore, in need of defense. This includes references to restrictions, challenges, or the destruction of democracy, as well as efforts to foster or maintain it.

Democracy as Leverage

Democracy is employed as part of rhetoric or evaluative-descriptive speech with the purpose of influencing opinions through association.

Other

This category includes the names of organizations, political parties, references to democracy as a state or entity.

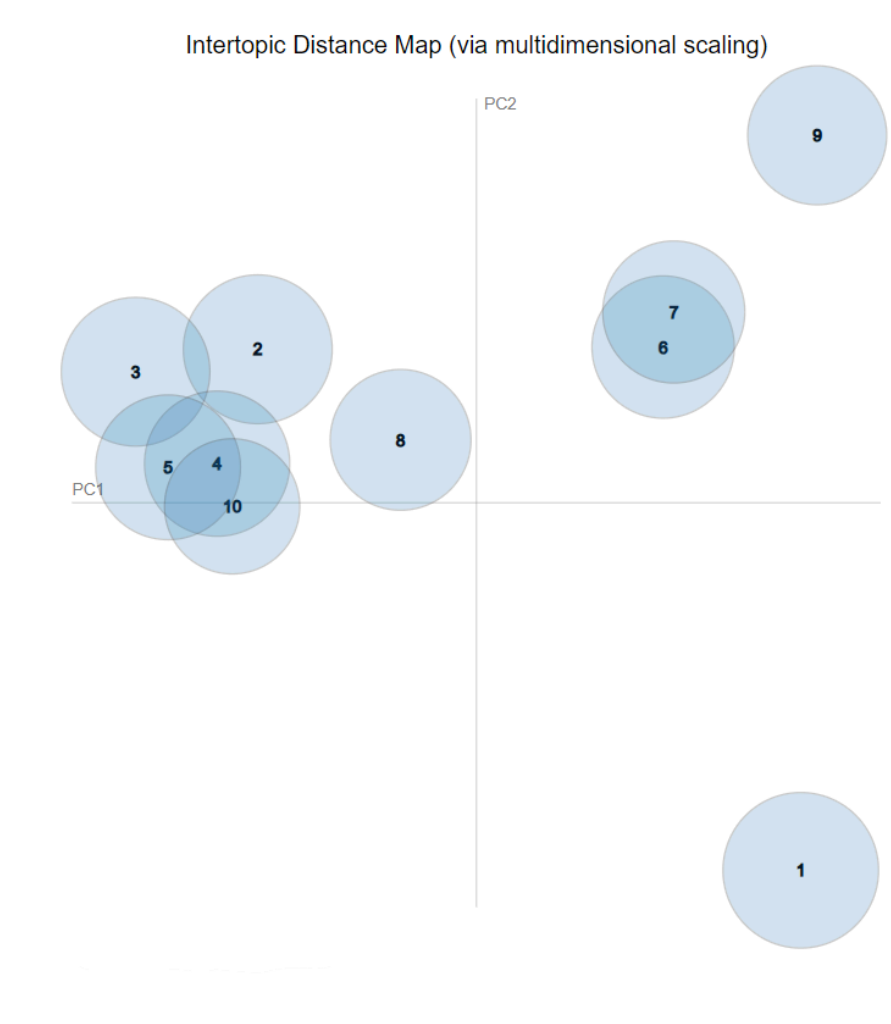
6. Discussion

- Our classes, created through manual annotation and a machine-learning model, contribute to the scholarly discussion on how democracy is used and defined in political rhetoric (Collier & Levitsky 1997; Hidalgo 2008; Gagnon 2018; Ihalaainen 2017; Kurunmäki, Nevers & te Velde 2018).
- The distribution of classes across political parties engages with previous research on how political parties use emotional arguments (Osnabrgge et al. 2023).
- Breaking down the frequency of the word democracy and its classes over time provides a new way of analyzing timeline series (Turunen et al. 2024).
- Collocation analysis and topic modeling allow for further identifying of themes within each country's democracy classes.

7. Challenges

- Fine-tuning the classes: improving inter-annotator agreement and elaborating on the results of classification.
- Deepening the discussion on how democracy is used as an argument: creating a more sophisticated explanation of the classes, particularly the leverage class.
- Applying the methodology to an extended timeframe: evaluating how changes within the classes connect to main historical events.

TOPIC MODELLING



- Topic 1: global situations as threats to democracy. Keywords: Afghanistan, India, Moscow, Taliban, military.

- Topic 7 and 9: Russian-Ukrainian war as a threat to democracy. Keywords: Ukraine, freedom, Russia, Putin, defend, invasion.

- Topic 3: threats to democracy as an institutional procedure. Keywords: executive, system, lords, parliament, elections, amendments.