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Multilingual Sentiment Analysis: Measuring Conflict in Parliamentary Speeches

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Comparative scholars of legislative politics continue to face the challenge of measuring a key theoretical concept: legislative conflict in a cross-national setting. We address this challenge with a multilingual sentiment-based approach and show that a sentiment-based measure can effectively capture government-opposition conflict. With this measure, we are able to recover government-opposition dynamics in budget debates (in Ireland), different levels of opposition support for selected government bills (in Canada), and differences in sentiment between government and opposition on government legislation (in Germany). In the latter case, differences in sentiment are a significant predictor of legislative amendment and unanimity passage votes. The use of a relatively simple, translatable sentiment tool opens up the possibility of directly comparable measures of legislative conflict across languages and countries.

Sven-Oliver Proksch is Full Professor and Chair for European Politics at the Center for Comparative Politics at the University of Cologne. Prior to Cologne, he was Associate Professor of Political Science at McGill University in Montreal. His research interests include political representation, democratic political institutions, party politics, parliamentary debates, political text analysis, and European politics.
