

CISTalks

Time: **2023-10-11T14:00**

Location: **BBBF-304B, Yeditepe University**

Open to the public. All are invited.

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence Applications on Politics: Assessing the effects of Social Bots on political discourse on Twitter through 2020 U.S. Presidential Election and 2022 Midterm Election

Alperen KAMBER

Department of Political Science and International Relations (PhD Candidate)

Advisor: Prof. Cengiz Erişen, Department of Political Science and International Relations

Abstract

This research investigates the impact of social bots on online political discourse during the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election and the 2022 Midterm Elections. The research utilized a dualistic approach, combining Computational Social Science methods with traditional survey experiments. In the first part, Twitter data was collected and analyzed using bot detection and social network analysis. In the second part, two survey experiments were conducted with U.S. voters to gather people's perspectives on social media and social bots in discussing political issues, assess their behavior in congruent and incongruent information environments, and measure their ability to detect social bots in Twitter conversations. When preparing survey experiments, we also utilized AI to generate tweets, profile pictures, and usernames and incorporated them into manufactured Twitter threads alongside real people's tweets.

While the computational data collection and analysis enabled us to demonstrate the presence and volume of bot activity in political networks, through the survey experiments we also tested "Spiral of Silence" theory to see whether people would fall silent when perceived majority's opinion contrasted theirs. The results from the first part (Twitter data), revealed an increase in bot activity from 2020 to 2022, whereas the results of the survey experiments varied within themselves. That is, both in 2020 and in 2022 election surveys, majority of the people stated that they would (1) refrain from posting something on Twitter with the concern of harassment or social isolation and (2) would retweet/like tweets that were in opposition to their opinion but seemed in parallel with the majority opinion. Yet, in the experimental section, we find that people tend to participate more when located in incongruent information environments. Finally, in both studies, majority of the people failed to successfully differentiate bot tweets from human tweets.

Biography

Alperen Kamber is a PhD candidate at Yeditepe University Department of Political Science and International Relations specializing on the potential impacts of Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven technology on contemporary social and political structures. His current research is focused on the impact of AI applications such as social bots on the political discourse on Twitter during election periods in order to understand whether bot presence and bot activities affect people's political deliberation online. In doing so, in his dissertation research, he employs Computational Social Science methods that combine elements of social science, computer science, and data analysis to examine social phenomena using computational methods. Alperen is a graduate of Yeditepe University Department of Public Administration and a Master's Degree recipient at Brunel University London in Intelligence and Security Studies. He currently works at a Turkish defense industry firm as a Senior Contract Administrator with past experience in international business development.