

# False Narratives and Political Mobilization

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*Abstract :*

We present an equilibrium model of politics in which political platforms compete over public opinion. A platform consists of a policy, a coalition of social groups with diverse intrinsic attitudes to policies, and a narrative. We conceptualize narratives as subjective models that attribute a commonly valued outcome to (potentially spurious) postulated causes. When quantified against empirical observations, these models generate a shared belief among coalition members over the outcome as a function of its postulated causes. The intensity of this belief and the members' intrinsic attitudes to the policy determine the strength of the coalition's mobilization. Only platforms that generate maximal mobilization prevail in equilibrium. Our equilibrium characterization demonstrates how false narratives can be detrimental for the common good, and how political fragmentation leads to their proliferation. The false narratives that emerge in equilibrium attribute good outcomes to the exclusion of social groups from ruling coalitions.