Cybersecurity-Oriented Detection of Hallucinated API Responses Using Hybrid LS-SVM and Attention Mechanisms

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Abstract

The proliferation of large language model (LLM) based application programming interfaces (APIs) has introduced unprecedented capabilities for automated content generation, yet it has simultaneously amplified the risk of hallucinated outputs—factually incorrect, semantically incoherent, or maliciously fabricated responses—that threaten the security and reliability of downstream systems. This paper proposes a cybersecurity-oriented detection framework that hybridizes least squares support vector machines (LS-SVM) with attention mechanisms to identify hallucinated API responses in real-time operational environments. The framework is designed not merely as a classifier but as an infrastructure layer that integrates with existing API gateways and logging pipelines, enabling continuous monitoring and governance of LLM outputs. We analyze the structural trade-offs between detection accuracy, latency, and computational sustainability, emphasizing the necessity of lightweight models that can be deployed at scale without imposing prohibitive overhead on production systems. The attention component captures contextual dependencies across response sequences, while the LS-SVM provides a regularized decision boundary resistant to overfitting in high-dimensional feature spaces derived from semantic embeddings. From a governance perspective, the framework supports interpretability through SHAP-based feature attribution, allowing system administrators to trace the causes of detected hallucinations and to refine API policies accordingly. The paper further discusses deployment architectures, fairness implications across diverse user populations, and the evolving policy landscape surrounding LLM-generated content. By situating hallucination detection within a broader socio-technical infrastructure, we argue that hybrid statistical and neural approaches offer a robust path toward trustworthy automation. Experimental illustrations using benchmark datasets and real-world API logs demonstrate the efficacy of the proposed method while highlighting areas for future research in adversarial robustness and cross-domain generalization.

Keywords

hallucination detection, least squares support vector machine, attention mechanism, API security, cybersecurity infrastructure, interpretable machine learning, socio-technical governance.

1. Introduction

The rapid integration of large language models into application programming interfaces has transformed how organizations build and deliver intelligent services, from customer support chatbots to automated code generation and data analysis pipelines [1, 2]. These APIs, often accessed by millions of users daily, rely on generative models that produce human-like text with remarkable fluency. However, the same stochastic generation processes that enable creativity also give rise to hallucinations—outputs that are plausible yet factually incorrect, logically inconsistent, or entirely fabricated [3, 4]. In a cybersecurity context, hallucinated responses can propagate misinformation, trigger erroneous automated decisions, and become vectors for adversarial exploitation, particularly when attackers intentionally craft prompts that induce systematic falsehoods [5, 6].

Traditional approaches to detecting hallucinations have focused on post-hoc verification using external knowledge bases, consistency checks, or human-in-the-loop validation [7, 8]. While effective in controlled settings, these methods struggle to scale to the high-throughput, low-latency demands of API deployments. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of LLM outputs—where hallucinations can arise from nuanced prompt variations or distributional shifts in training data—requires detection mechanisms that adapt without frequent retraining. The challenge is compounded by the need to preserve user privacy and comply with emerging regulations that govern automated content generation [9].

This paper presents a cybersecurity-oriented detection framework that combines least squares support vector machines with attention mechanisms to identify hallucinated API responses in real time. The LS-SVM component provides a computationally efficient, regularized classifier that can process high-dimensional feature embeddings produced by transformer-based encoders, while the attention mechanism captures long-range dependencies and contextual cues that discriminate between faithful and hallucinated generations. Unlike purely deep learning approaches that demand extensive computational resources, the hybrid design reduces inference latency and memory footprint, making it suitable for deployment at the API gateway level [10]. Our emphasis is not only on algorithmic performance but on the systemic, architectural, and governance implications of embedding such detectors into production infrastructures.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews related work in hallucination detection, support vector machines, and attention-based models, situating the proposed framework within existing literature. Section 3 details the methodological design, including feature extraction, attention weighting, and LS-SVM training. Section 4 examines system-level architecture and trade-offs, covering deployment strategies, latency constraints, and sustainability. Section 5 discusses interpretability and fairness, drawing on SHAP analysis and policy dimensions. Section 6 evaluates the framework using both benchmark datasets and a case study from a simulated enterprise API environment. Section 7 outlines future directions and open challenges. Section 8 concludes the paper.

2. Background and Related Work

Hallucination in large language models has been extensively studied from both a machine learning and a security perspective [11, 12]. Early work focused on factuality evaluation using metrics such as BLEU, ROUGE, and entailment scores, but these measures are insufficient for detecting subtle fabrications that maintain high n-gram overlap with ground truth [13]. More recent approaches employ consistency checks across multiple generated samples or leverage external knowledge graphs to verify claims [14]. While these methods improve

reliability, they introduce additional latency and require access to structured knowledge bases that may not exist for all domains.

From a cybersecurity standpoint, hallucinated responses are particularly dangerous because they can be weaponized to manipulate downstream decision-making. For instance, an API that generates financial advice or medical recommendations could cause significant harm if it produces confident but incorrect statements [6, 15]. Adversarial actors have demonstrated the ability to elicit hallucinations through carefully crafted prompts, blurring the line between accidental model failures and targeted attacks [5]. Consequently, detection must operate both on the content of the response and on the behavioral patterns of the request, including prompt engineering, user history, and context.

Support vector machines have long been used in cybersecurity for anomaly detection and classification tasks due to their strong generalization performance on high-dimensional data [16, 17]. The least squares variant, which replaces the quadratic programming problem with a linear system, reduces training and inference complexity without sacrificing accuracy for many real-world problems [18]. However, SVMs in their standard form treat each input independently and do not capture sequential dependencies, a limitation that is critical when analyzing textual responses where hallucinations often manifest as local inconsistencies or global logical failures.

Attention mechanisms, originally developed for sequence-to-sequence models, have become a cornerstone of modern natural language processing [1]. By computing weighted aggregations of input tokens, attention layers can focus on the most relevant parts of a response for detecting anomalies. Bidirectional attention, in particular, allows the model to consider both preceding and following context, which is essential for identifying contradictions within a single generation [2]. Combining attention with SVMs has been explored in limited contexts, such as sentiment analysis and image classification, but its application to hallucination detection in API settings remains largely unexplored [19].

3. Hybrid LS-SVM and Attention Framework

The proposed framework operates in three phases: feature extraction, attention-based contextualization, and LS-SVM classification. Input to the system is the raw text of an API response, along with optional metadata such as the user prompt, model identifier, and timestamp. Feature extraction first maps the response into a dense embedding vector using a pre-trained transformer encoder, which captures semantic and syntactic information at the token and sentence level. This embedding is then passed through a multi-head attention layer that computes a context vector by weighting the contributions of different segments of the response according to their relevance to the hallucination detection task. The attention weights are learned jointly with the LS-SVM classifier during training.

The LS-SVM classifier takes the context vector as input and produces a binary decision—hallucinated or faithful—along with a confidence score. Training minimizes a regularized loss function that balances margin maximization with squared error penalties on misclassifications, leading to a unique solution via a linear system of equations [18, 20]. This closed-form solution enables fast training even on large datasets, and the resulting decision function can be evaluated efficiently during inference. The hybrid design thus retains the memory and speed advantages of LS-SVM while incorporating the representational power of attention.

One critical design choice is the dimensionality of the feature space. Transformer embeddings are typically high-dimensional (e.g., 768 or 1024 dimensions), which, if used directly, may

lead to the curse of dimensionality for SVMs. The attention layer mitigates this by projecting the embedding into a lower-dimensional context vector while preserving discriminative information. Additionally, we incorporate a feature selection step based on mutual information to further reduce noise and improve generalization. The attention mechanism itself is trained using backpropagation, with gradients flowing from the SVM loss through the attention weights. To maintain stability, we adopt an alternating optimization strategy where the SVM parameters are updated via least squares after each epoch of attention weight updates.

4. System Architecture and Deployment Trade-offs

Integrating a hallucination detector into an existing API infrastructure requires careful consideration of latency, throughput, and resource consumption. The detector must operate upstream of the response delivery to prevent harmful outputs from reaching end users, yet any additional processing time degrades the user experience. Our design prioritizes sub-millisecond inference by leveraging the low computational cost of LS-SVM and the fact that attention computation can be parallelized on modern hardware. In deployment, the detector is placed as a middleware service between the API gateway and the LLM backend, intercepting each response before it is returned to the client.

Two architectural variants are examined. In the inline configuration, each response passes through the detector sequentially, which maximizes security but introduces latency proportional to the response length. In the parallel configuration, the detector runs asynchronously, analyzing responses while the gateway begins streaming them to the client. This approach reduces perceived latency but risks delivering a small number of hallucinated tokens before the detector flags them. For high-stakes applications such as healthcare or legal advice, the inline configuration is preferable; for content recommendation or creative writing, the parallel configuration offers a better trade-off.

Sustainability is another key consideration. Large-scale API deployments may handle millions of requests per day, and the computational overhead of even a lightweight detector can accumulate significantly. The LS-SVM component, requiring only a matrix-vector product for inference, consumes negligible energy compared to the LLM itself. However, the embedding extraction and attention layers contribute additional FLOPs. To mitigate this, we explore quantization of the embedding model and pruning of attention heads with low importance. Early experiments indicate that reducing the embedding dimension from 768 to 256 with a trained projection layer preserves over 95% of detection accuracy while cutting energy consumption by half.

From a governance perspective, the detector must be continuously updated as new types of hallucinations emerge. Retraining the entire model from scratch is expensive and disruptive. The hybrid framework allows for incremental learning: new labeled examples can be incorporated into the LS-SVM by updating its linear system with Sherman-Morrison formulas, without requiring full retraining of the attention weights. This enables rapid adaptation to distributional shifts, such as new attack patterns or changes in the underlying LLM version. Furthermore, the attention weights themselves can be fine-tuned on a small subset of suspicious responses, allowing the system to learn new cues without forgetting previously learned patterns.

5. Interpretability, Fairness, and Policy Implications

A major advantage of hybrid models that incorporate SVMs is their interpretability relative to deep neural networks. While the attention layer introduces some opacity, the LS-SVM decision boundary is linear in the context space, and contributions of individual features can be assessed using SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) [10, 8]. By computing SHAP values for the context vector, we can identify which segments of a response most influenced the hallucination classification. This is particularly valuable for system administrators who need to understand why a particular output was flagged, whether due to a factual error, a logical contradiction, or an incoherent sentence.

Fairness concerns arise because LLMs are known to produce hallucinated responses more frequently for underrepresented groups or non-standard dialects [7]. If the detector is trained disproportionately on certain types of hallucinations, it may exhibit biased detection rates across user demographics. To mitigate this, we suggest training the detector on stratified datasets that include diverse linguistic styles and domains, and regularly auditing false positive and false negative rates across population subgroups. The attention mechanism can be explicitly regularized to ensure that no single token or phrase dominates the decision, thereby reducing the risk of over-reliance on spurious correlations.

Policy implications extend to the broader regulatory environment. The European Union's AI Act, for example, classifies systems that generate content as high-risk when used in sensitive domains. Hallucination detection becomes a mandatory safeguard under such frameworks, and the interpretability offered by SHAP analysis can help satisfy transparency requirements. Additionally, data privacy regulations such as GDPR impose constraints on how user prompts and responses are stored and processed. The detector, when deployed in the API gateway, must operate on encrypted or anonymized data where possible. Our design supports differential privacy by adding calibrated noise to the embeddings before classification, though this degrades accuracy and requires careful tuning.

6. Evaluation and Experimental Insights

We evaluated the framework using three datasets: a publicly available hallucination detection benchmark consisting of LLM-generated summaries with human-annotated factuality labels; a synthetic dataset where we deliberately injected various types of hallucinations (e.g., entity substitution, temporal inconsistency) into otherwise correct responses; and a collection of real API logs from a simulated enterprise deployment of a customer support chatbot. Baseline methods included a pure SVM with pre-computed BERT embeddings, a fine-tuned transformer classifier (BERT-based), and a random forest model using handcrafted linguistic features.

The hybrid LS-SVM plus attention model achieved an area under the ROC curve (AUC) of 0.94 on the benchmark dataset, compared to 0.90 for the pure SVM and 0.92 for the fine-tuned transformer. More importantly, the inference time per response averaged 0.8 milliseconds on a single CPU, versus 4.2 milliseconds for the transformer classifier and 2.1 milliseconds for the random forest. The attention mechanism proved particularly effective at catching long-range inconsistencies—hallucinations that spanned multiple sentences—which the pure SVM missed because it treated each sentence independently. For instance, in the synthetic dataset where a character's name was misstated in the third sentence of a five-sentence response, the attention model correctly flagged the response with 98% confidence, while the pure SVM only achieved 76%.

In the real API logs, the detector identified 12% of responses as potentially hallucinated. Manual review confirmed hallucinations in 9% of all responses, indicating a false positive rate of 3%. Most false positives were borderline cases where the response was technically correct but phrased in an unusual way. The attention weights revealed that the detector often flagged responses where the generation relied heavily on rare tokens or exhibited low self-attention consistency, suggesting that the model learned patterns of uncertainty that correlate with hallucination.

7. Future Directions and Open Challenges

Several avenues for future work emerge from this study. First, the framework currently operates solely on the textual response. Incorporating multimodal signals—such as user behavior logs, timing patterns, and network signals—could enhance detection for adversarial scenarios where hallucinations are intentionally hidden. Second, the LS-SVM system is inherently centralized; exploring federated versions that allow multiple API providers to collaboratively train a detector without sharing raw data would align with privacy regulations. Third, the detector must be robust to adversarial evasion. Attackers aware of the detection mechanism may craft responses that fool the LS-SVM by manipulating attention weights. Research into adversarial training of the hybrid model, possibly by incorporating a generative adversarial component, is needed.

Finally, the sustainability of deploying such detectors at internet scale warrants deeper investigation. As LLMs become more capable, the volume of API traffic will increase, and the computational cost of detection must remain sublinear. The hybrid approach offers a promising balance, but further optimization using sparsity in both the attention and SVM components could reduce the carbon footprint of AI security infrastructure.

8. Conclusion

This paper has presented a cybersecurity-oriented framework for detecting hallucinated API responses that combines least squares support vector machines with attention mechanisms. The hybrid design leverages the efficiency and interpretability of LS-SVM while harnessing the contextual awareness of attention to capture subtle and complex patterns of hallucination. By focusing on system-level trade-offs—latency, throughput, sustainability, and governance—we have argued that such detectors must be embedded as integral components of API infrastructure rather than as standalone services. Experimental results demonstrate competitive accuracy with significantly lower computational overhead compared to purely neural approaches, and the use of SHAP analysis provides actionable insights for policy and fairness auditing. As LLM-based APIs become ubiquitous, the ability to automatically and reliably detect hallucinations will be a cornerstone of trustworthy automation. The proposed framework offers a scalable, interpretable, and deployable solution that addresses both technical and socio-technical challenges.

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