KIMI_REVIEW_v8

Peer Review: "Governance or Competition? Divergent Frames in AI Policy Discourse Across the US and Global South"

Reviewer: Kimi K2.5 (Red Team)

Summary Assessment

This revised manuscript represents a substantial improvement over prior versions. The authors have clearly engaged with previous reviewer feedback, particularly in their more cautious causal framing, explicit acknowledgment of methodological limitations, and improved reporting of reliability statistics and effect sizes. The core contribution—a systematic documentation of framing divergences between US competition-focused discourse and Global South governance-focused discourse—remains valuable and timely.

Response to Prior Reviewer Concerns

Adequately Addressed:

1. **Document type limitation**: The authors now explicitly acknowledge that US congressional hearings and SA/Brazilian policy documents represent different genres with different rhetorical conventions. This is discussed substantively in both Method and Limitations sections. This transparency strengthens the paper.

2. **Reliability reporting**: Per-frame reliability statistics are now reported ($\kappa = .52$ for US rights framing), and findings with lower reliability are flagged for cautious interpretation. This is good practice.

3. **Causal language**: The manuscript has been carefully revised to frame the developer/adopter hypothesis as speculative rather than established. Phrases like "may reflect" and "hypothesis warranting further investigation" appropriately qualify claims.

4. **Effect sizes**: Cramér's V is now reported and interpreted following Cohen's conventions, allowing readers to assess practical significance alongside statistical significance.

5. **Transparency about LLM coding**: The authors acknowledge the absence of human validation subsets as a limitation.

Remaining Issues Requiring Attention

1. Theoretical Engagement with Southern Frameworks

While the paper gestures toward "Global South perspectives," it remains theoretically rooted in Western framing scholarship (Entman, Gamson & Modigliani, Baumgartner & Jones). The literature review would benefit from engagement with postcolonial technology studies —works by scholars like Sabelo Mlambo, Clapperton Mavhunga, or the broader "decolonizing AI" literature. These frameworks might offer alternative explanations for the governance emphasis in SA/Brazil: not merely "adopter positioning" but deliberate resistance

to hegemonic technological imperialism. The governance frame could be read as asserting regulatory sovereignty against US/Chinese platform dominance—a subtle but important reframing.

2. The EU as Missing Comparator

The manuscript frequently references Ulnicane et al.'s (2021) European analysis but lacks direct EU comparison in the empirical analysis. This omission is particularly noticeable given the EU's AI Act implementation during the study period. Including even a limited EU sample would strengthen claims about US exceptionalism versus broader Western patterns. The EU's governance-competition hybrid might serve as a useful "middle case."

3. Missing Literature on "Techno-Nationalism"

The sovereignty framing analysis would benefit from engagement with recent work on techno-nationalism (e.g., Segal & Gerstel 2022; Lindsay & Gorman 2022). These scholars have documented the specific rhetorical conventions of US-China technology competition discourse. The paper's examples ("race against China," "democracies vs. autocracies") closely mirror this literature, and explicit connection would strengthen theoretical grounding.

4. Questions About Inter-Coder Reliability for South Africa

The initial κ = .45 for South Africa fell below acceptable thresholds. While the authors conducted adjudication, the description of this process is somewhat thin. How were the 15 disagreements selected? Were they representative of the full disagreement distribution? More detail on adjudication protocols would strengthen confidence in these findings.

5. The "Sovereignty" Frame Needs Conceptual Unpacking

The sovereignty frame combines geopolitical competition (22% US) with what might be distinct concerns about regulatory autonomy. The EU's "digital sovereignty" discourse differs meaningfully from US "AI nationalism." The manuscript would benefit from distinguishing external-facing sovereignty (competition with China) from internal-facing sovereignty (regulatory autonomy from foreign platforms). The latter may actually appear in SA/Brazilian discourse but be coded differently.

Suggestions for Minor Revision

1. **Expand the theoretical framework** to include at least one substantive engagement with postcolonial technology studies or Southern theory. The current framing risks reproducing a "development" narrative where Global South nations are positioned as reactive adopters rather than agents with distinctive normative frameworks.

2. **Clarify the adjudication procedure** for South African coding disagreements with additional methodological detail.

3. **Consider distinguishing** external-facing from internal-facing sovereignty in the framing typology, or acknowledge this limitation.

4. **Add brief discussion** of why EU documents were not included and whether this represents a planned future direction.

Overall Recommendation: MINOR REVISION

This manuscript makes a valuable empirical contribution to comparative AI policy studies. The revisions have addressed major methodological concerns from prior rounds. The remaining issues are primarily matters of theoretical expansion and conceptual refinement rather than fundamental flaws. I recommend **Minor Revision** with the expectation that authors engage with at least one major strand of Southern/ postcolonial technology theory and clarify the South African adjudication procedure.

The core finding—that US discourse emphasizes competition while SA/Brazilian discourse emphasizes governance—is well-supported by the evidence presented and represents a meaningful addition to the literature. The paper's cautious framing of causal claims and explicit limitation discussion provide appropriate scope boundaries.

With modest theoretical elaboration, this manuscript will be suitable for publication.

Specific Citations Suggested

- Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A. (2019). *The costs of connection: How data is colonizing human life and appropriating it for capitalism.* Stanford University Press.
- Mavhunga, C. (Ed.). (2020). *What do science, technology, and innovation mean from Africa?* MIT Press.
- Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform capitalism.* Polity. [for adopter/developer dynamics]
- Segal, A., & Gerstel, D. (2022). AI and the return of great power competition. *Foreign Affairs.*

Review submitted: 2026-03-12