

One Schema, Two Verdicts? Geotechnological Origin and Public Sentiment towards Artificial Intelligence

Abstract

How does the public view artificial intelligence when technology seemingly represents a form of geopolitical rivalry? This study examines techno-nationalism as a political communication mechanism that structures asymmetric evaluations of foreign and domestic AI. Rather than seeing techno-nationalism as a fixed attitude, we view it as a frame-switching schema activated by a technology's geotechnological origin. We argue that the same nationalist feelings can drive both rejection of foreign technology and support for domestic innovation. We test this argument through a mixture of computational and experimental research design. Study 1 analyzes large social media discussions about three examples: a domestic hardware company under sanctions, a well-known foreign AI agent, and a celebrated domestic AI agent. The analysis shows how stories of technological victimhood migrate from the sanctions episode into evaluations of the foreign AI system, while the domestic AI system is viewed through stories of breakthroughs and national pride. Study 2 uses a pre-registered survey experiment with a diverse domestic sample to show that techno-nationalist threat signals significantly lower positive feelings toward the foreign AI system. Study 3 employs a counterfactual origin-labeling experiment that holds AI performance constant while varying whether an identical model is attributed to the domestic nation, a rival foreign power, or an international open-source community. Across these three studies, the results indicate that AI is judged not just by its capabilities but also by the geopolitical identity it represents. This study adds to the fields of political socialization and digital governance by showing how the origins of technology serve as a cue that shifts technical evaluations into geopolitical judgments.