
Salvific Rhetoric and Democratic Restraints: Techno-Messianism in American Semiconductor and AI Governance

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Abstract

Contemporary techno-nationalist policies increasingly deploy moral and salvific rhetoric that are beyond the traditional economic or security rationales. This research investigates how U.S. state and elite discourses construct technology as a driving force for national salvation. It employs wide-ranging analysis of publicly available policy documents, speeches, and reports from 2017-2025. Using systematic secondary data analysis, Rapid Thematic Analysis, and Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model, this study analyzes 51 coded segments from 18 meticulously chosen documents of Trump and Biden's tenure. These four dominant salvific narratives appear: (1) Geopolitical Rivalry as Existential Crisis, (2) Technological Mastery as National Renewal, (3) Security and Workforce Protection as Ethical Imperative, and (4) Policy Moments as Prophetic Turning Points. Critical discourse analysis demonstrates how metaphorical language and moral assertions legitimize policies like the CHIPS and Science Act and AI executive orders as a necessity for national salvation. Comparative analysis shows Trump administration's crisis-driven unilateralism versus Biden administration's renewal-focused multilateralism. It has used both techno-messianic framings that marginalize alternative approaches to global technology governance. This research contributes to social sciences and technology by theorizing "techno-messianism" as a framework for understanding how moral imaginaries legitimize current technology policies, along with its implications for democratic accountability and international cooperation.

Keywords: Techno-nationalism, Secondary Qualitative Research, Critical Discourse Analysis, U.S. Technology Policy, Secular Messianism, Moral Legitimation, Chips Act, Artificial Intelligence

Introduction

The spread of moral and salvific rhetoric in contemporary technology policy discourse has been influenced by America's technological supremacy and geopolitical interests. It raises questions about how states construct technological meanings through discursive practices¹. Contemporary

¹ The profusion of moral vocabularies in tech-policy discourse has created new analytical challenges for understanding how states legitimate technological interventions through salvific rather than purely economic

techno-nationalist policies increasingly use moral and salvific rhetoric that transcends traditional economic or security rational (Wu, 2024). However, existing scholarship has inadequately theorized how this moral language channelizes into legitimate state interventions in technological development, which is also simultaneously, constructing national identities through technological narratives.

In realm of technology policy literature claiming to understand techno-nationalism's moral dimensions, there is a propensity to intellectually secure technological competition. It is within a resolute system of geopolitical 'truths'. Scholarship seeking to unravel the supposed particulars of techno-nationalist discourse usually tends to focus on economic competition and national security concerns. Then to pursue research agendas positioning on exploring technological sovereignty. Lastly, to explore technology policy through the prism of great power competition (Reich, 1987; Edler, 2017). These debates then depend on, produce and reproduce knowledge about technology governance which consequently generates contemporary 'reality'. Thus, techno-nationalism is what we know about it through moral vocabularies and salvific framings.

Drawing on (Campbell, 1992), discourses often construct technological meanings by delimiting fields of representation, establishing identities that appear pre-given rather than constructed². How are we to approach these articulations that affix salvific meanings to technology as salvation?

This study investigates how U.S. state and elite discourses construct technology as a vehicle for national salvation. It focuses on semiconductors and artificial intelligence policies during 2017-2025³. The study bridges political philosophy, critical geopolitics, and Science and Technology Studies (STS) to reveal the moral imaginaries underlying current techno-political strategies (Jasanoff, 2004). The primary research question inquires: How do U.S. state and elite discourses narrate technology as a means for national salvation, and what are the implications for democratic governance and international cooperation?

This study demonstrates that techno-messianic discourse provides important legitimacy for technology investments. At the same time it potentially constrains deliberative processes and marginalizes alternative approaches⁴. The research contributes theoretically by introducing "techno-messianism" as an analytical framework that integrates insights from techno-nationalism studies, political messianism theory, and STS approaches to co-construction (Bijker, 1995; Pinch, 1984). Empirically, it reveals systematic patterns in U.S. technology policy discourse that persist across different administrations and technological domains. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of combining secondary qualitative research with critical discourse analysis for examining policy legitimization processes.

arguments. This depicts a significant departure from traditional techno-nationalist approaches that emphasizes primarily economic and security rationales.

² Campbell (1992) argues that discourses construct identities by inscribing boundaries that exclude alternative meanings. It is a process that illuminates how U.S. techno-nationalist policies (such as the CHIPS and Science Act and AI executive orders) frame semiconductors and artificial intelligence as salvific forces necessary for national renewal and geopolitical survival (Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 8–12).

³ The selection of semiconductors and AI reflects their prominence in contemporary technology policy discourse as well as their representation across different technological realms. These technologies exemplify the breadth of contemporary techno-nationalist concerns.

⁴ This represents a crucial tension in contemporary democratic governance where moral legitimacy may conflict with deliberative democratic requirements for open debate about policy alternatives. The tension between efficiency and legitimacy becomes particularly acute in technology policy contexts.

Structure and Methodology

This analysis employs systematic secondary data analysis of 18 official documents, applying (Braun, 2006) thematic analysis framework and (Fairclough, 1995) three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model. The research examines moral narratives in semiconductors and AI policies through documented policy speeches, executive orders, and official reports spanning 2017-2025.

Literature Review

Techno-Nationalism: From Economic Strategy to Moral Imperative

The emergence of techno-nationalism as a dominant framework for understanding contemporary technology governance represents a significant transformation in how states approach technological development⁵. Traditional conceptualizations of techno-nationalism emphasized state policies in promoting domestic technological capabilities for economic competitiveness and national security. However, modern manifestations reveal increasingly complex moral and cultural dimensions that existing scholarship has inadequately theorized.

(Reich, 1987) foundational work introduced techno-nationalism as state intervention in technology markets to enhance national competitive advantage⁶. His analysis focused primarily on economic rationales and industrial policy instruments. It established a framework that dominated subsequent scholarship for decades. Nevertheless, Reich's approach was unsuccessful to account for how moral vocabularies might legitimate such interventions which is beyond purely economic considerations.

Contemporary developments have complicated this economic-centric understanding significantly. (Luo Y. , 2021) comprehensive analysis of Chinese techno-nationalism demonstrates how technological policies increasingly deploy cultural and ideological justifications that transcend traditional economic logic⁷. *Inter alia*, (Edler, 2017) innovation policy research reveals how states employ normative framings to legitimize market interventions that might otherwise face democratic resistance⁸. These insights suggest that understanding techno-nationalism requires examining not only economic and security rationales but also moral and cultural dimensions.

Recent scholarship has identified several critical gaps in existing techno-nationalism literature⁹. First, insufficient attention to how moral vocabularies construct technological meanings and legitimate policy interventions. Second, limited theoretical integration between techno-nationalism studies and broader work on political legitimation and discourse analysis. Third,

⁵ Contemporary techno-nationalism exhibits significantly greater complexity than earlier manifestations, particularly in the deployment of moral vocabularies that transcend traditional economic rationales. This evolution reflects broader changes in how states approach technological competition in globalized contexts.

⁶ Reich's foundational analysis established techno-nationalism as primarily economic phenomenon, creating theoretical framework that influenced subsequent scholarship for decades. His emphasis on industrial competitiveness provided the conceptual foundation for understanding state intervention in technology markets.

⁷ Luo's analysis of Chinese techno-nationalism reveals how contemporary manifestations deploy cultural and ideological justifications that challenge purely economic interpretations. This research demonstrates the limitations of Western-centric approaches to understanding techno-nationalism in different cultural contexts.

⁸ Innovation policy research increasingly recognizes moral framings as essential legitimation mechanisms rather than secondary rhetorical strategies. This scholarship reveals how ethical vocabularies enable democratic legitimacy for policies that might otherwise face market-oriented criticisms.

⁹ These theoretical gaps create opportunities for advancing understanding through systematic analysis of moral vocabularies in technology policy discourse. The gaps reflect broader limitations in interdisciplinary research which connects political philosophy, STS, and policy analysis.

inadequate comparative analysis of how different national contexts produce varying forms of techno-nationalist discourse.

Political Messianism: Secular Salvation and Crisis Legitimation

Political messianism scholarship provides crucial theoretical resources for understanding how contemporary states deploy salvific rhetoric to legitimate exceptional measures¹⁰. (Talmon, 1960) seminal analysis of political messianism in revolutionary movements established foundational insights about how crisis narratives enable the bypassing of normal deliberative processes through moral urgency claims¹¹. Nevertheless, Talmon's focus on revolutionary contexts limited application to contemporary democratic governance contexts.

(Schmitt, 2005) political theology offers essential analytical tools for examining how crisis construction operates in technological contexts¹². His analysis demonstrates how sovereign authority derives from the capacity to decide on exceptions to normal legal and political order. When applied to technology policy, Schmittian insights illuminate how techno-nationalist discourse constructs technological challenges as existential crises requiring immediate state intervention.

Contemporary scholarship has extended political messianism analysis to democratic contexts with significant implications for understanding techno-nationalist discourse¹³. (Weiler, 2012) ¹⁴examination of European integration as political messianism demonstrates how secular projects employ salvific rhetoric, involving crisis narratives, redemptive visions, and teleological temporality, for legitimation purposes. These insights on crisis, redemption, and temporality inform this study's analysis of techno-nationalist discourse in U.S. technology policy.

Nevertheless, several critical limitations characterize existing political messianism scholarship. Limited research connects political messianism theory to technology policy analysis. Insufficient attention to how secular messianism operates through specifically technological vocabularies and narratives. Inadequate examination of how messianic discourse interacts with democratic institutions and processes in technology governance contexts.

Science and Technology Studies: Co-Construction and Technological Meanings

STS scholarship demonstrates that technological meanings are socially constructed through interactions among relevant social groups rather than predetermined by technical characteristics

¹⁰ Political messianism scholarship provides essential analytical resources for understanding how secular projects employ salvific rhetoric for legitimation purposes. This theoretical tradition offers insights into how democratic societies can adopt messianic structures without revolutionary transformation

¹¹ Talmon's analysis of revolutionary messianism established foundational insights about crisis construction and moral urgency that remain relevant for contemporary democratic contexts. His work illuminates how messianic themes can operate through institutional rather than purely revolutionary mechanisms.

¹² Schmitt's political theology illuminates how sovereign authority derives from capacity to decide on exceptions to normal legal and political order. When applied to technology policy, these insights reveal how crisis narratives enable extraordinary state interventions in market processes.

¹³ Contemporary applications of political messianism to democratic contexts reveal how salvific discourse operates through institutional rather than purely revolutionary mechanisms. This research demonstrates the adaptability of messianic frameworks to different political systems and contexts.

¹⁴ Weiler (2012) analyzes European integration as political messianism, highlighting how crisis narratives, redemptive visions, and teleological temporality legitimize secular projects, insights that inform this study's examination of salvific rhetoric in U.S. techno-nationalist discourses, such as the CHIPS and Science Act and AI executive orders, framing technology as essential for national salvation ("Europe in Crisis—On 'Political Messianism', 'Legitimacy' and the 'Rule of Law'," *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies*, 248–268).

(Pinch, 1984)¹⁵. The Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework emphasizes interpretive flexibility during technological development, where different groups attribute different meanings to the same artifact before stabilization occurs through social processes.

(Bijker, 1995) SCOT approach identifies three key concepts that illuminate techno-nationalist discourse analysis¹⁶. First, interpretive flexibility refers to different meanings attributed to the same technology by various social groups. Second, relevant social groups are stakeholders with shared interpretations of technological artifacts. Third, stabilization mechanisms are processes through which one interpretation prevails over alternatives. These concepts demonstrate how technological development is fundamentally social and political rather than purely technical.

Recent STS work examines how policy discourses co-construct technological meanings and social identities, with particular attention to how moral vocabularies shape technological trajectories (Jasanoff, 2004)¹⁷. Jasanoff's co-production framework reveals how scientific knowledge and social order are mutually constitutive, providing insights for understanding how techno-nationalist discourse simultaneously constructs technological meanings and national identities¹⁸.

However, significant theoretical gaps remain in STS literature relevant to techno-nationalism analysis. Limited research connects STS insights to political messianism or techno-nationalist discourse analysis. Insufficient attention to how co-construction processes operate through explicitly ideological and moral mechanisms. Inadequate examination of how technological meanings become embedded in national identities through policy discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis: Power, Legitimation, and Technological Discourse

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides systematic methodological tools for examining how language constructs and maintains power relations in technology policy contexts (Fairclough, 1995)¹⁹. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework enables analysis of text, discursive practice, and social practice, making it particularly valuable for examining policy legitimation processes. Fairclough's (1995) approach demonstrates how discourse both reflects and shapes social structures through three interconnected levels of analysis²⁰. First, text analysis examines linguistic features including vocabulary, grammar, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies. Second, discursive practice analysis explores text production, distribution, and consumption contexts within

¹⁵ STS scholarship demonstrates that technological meanings emerge through social processes rather than technical determinism which gives crucial insights for understanding policy discourse. This theoretical foundation challenges assumptions about technological inevitability in policy analysis.

¹⁶ Bijker's SCOT framework identifies interpretive flexibility, relevant social groups, and stabilization mechanisms as key concepts for understanding technological development. These concepts provide analytical tools for examining how policy discourse shapes technological meanings.

¹⁷ Recent STS work increasingly examines how moral vocabularies shape technological trajectories through legitimation rather than purely technical processes. This research reveals the political dimensions of technological development that are often obscured by technical language.

¹⁸ Jasanoff's co-production framework reveals mutual constitution of scientific knowledge and social order, providing insights for understanding techno-nationalist discourse. Her analysis demonstrates how technological and social meanings are simultaneously constructed through political processes.

¹⁹ CDA provides systematic methodological tools for examining how language constructs and maintains power relations in technology policy contexts. This methodological approach enables analysis of both linguistic features and broader social structures simultaneously.

²⁰ The three-dimensional approach demonstrates how discourse operates simultaneously across micro, meso, and macro levels of social organization. This framework enables systematic analysis of how linguistic choices reflect and shape broader power relations.

institutional frameworks. Third, social practice analysis situates discourse within broader social structures and power relations.

Contemporary CDA research increasingly examines technology policy discourse with attention to how moral vocabularies legitimate specific political arrangements (van Dijk, 2015)²¹. Van Dijk's analysis of ideological discourse reveals how power relations operate through seemingly neutral technical discussions²². Moreover, critical discourse scholars have demonstrated how technological discourse naturalizes particular social arrangements while marginalizing alternatives.

Nonetheless, several limitations characterize existing CDA research relevant to techno-nationalism analysis. Limited work connects CDA insights to political messianism or salvific discourse analysis. Insufficient comparative research examining how different national contexts produce varying forms of technological discourse. Inadequate attention to how CDA methods might illuminate the moral dimensions of techno-nationalist rhetoric.

Theoretical Synthesis and Research Gaps

This literature review reveals several critical gaps that this research addresses through theoretical and empirical contributions. Theoretically, existing scholarship lacks integration between techno-nationalism studies, political messianism theory, and STS co-construction approaches. Empirically, limited systematic analysis examines how moral vocabularies operate in contemporary U.S. technology policy discourse. Methodologically, insufficient research demonstrates how secondary qualitative research methods might illuminate policy legitimation processes.

The dominant understanding of techno-nationalism continues to emphasize economic and security rationales, despite growing evidence that moral and cultural dimensions play increasingly important roles²³. However, many insights offered by scholars examining moral dimensions of technological discourse are either ignored or overlooked in mainstream technology policy literature, thereby naturalizing quite unabatedly economic interpretations of techno-nationalist policies.

These theoretical gaps create opportunities for advancing understanding of how contemporary states deploy moral imaginaries to legitimate technology policies. The moral vocabularies and salvific framings identified in preliminary analysis suggest that techno-nationalism operates through mechanisms more complex than existing scholarship recognizes²⁴. How are we to approach these ostensibly different moral articulations which aspire to affix salvific meanings to technological development?

Research Methodology

Research Design and Philosophical Foundations

²¹ This scholarship reveals how seemingly technical discussions carry significant political and ideological implications.

²² Van Dijk's analysis reveals how power relations operate through seemingly neutral technical discussions that naturalize particular political arrangements. His work demonstrates the ideological functions of discourse that appears to be purely descriptive or technical.

²³ The dominant understanding continues to emphasize economic and security rationales despite growing evidence of moral dimensions' importance. This persistence reflects broader theoretical limitations in connecting political philosophy to technology policy analysis.

²⁴ Moral vocabularies and salvific framings suggest techno-nationalism operates through mechanisms more complex than existing scholarship recognizes. These complexities require new theoretical frameworks that integrate insights from multiple disciplinary traditions.

This study employs a secondary qualitative research design that analyzes existing publicly available documents to investigate techno-messianic discourse in U.S. technology policy (Cheong, 2023)²⁵. The dominance of official government discourse in technology policy has given America's technological leadership and institutional authority. It resultantly, gave rise to questions about how state narratives construct technological meanings through moral vocabularies.

Within the methodological literature on secondary qualitative research, there is a propensity to secure document analysis within established frameworks emphasizing data quality and analytical rigor (Heaton, 2008; Long-Sutehall, T., Sque, M., & Addington-Hall, J., 2010)^{26,27}. This research takes a constructivist epistemological stance that is consistent with STS approaches. It also recognizes that technological meanings and policy narratives are socially constructed through discursive processes instead of existing independently of interpretive frameworks. This study adopts a critical realist ontology that acknowledges both the material reality of technological artifacts and the social construction of their meanings through discourse (Fairclough, 1995)²⁸. This philosophical position enables examination of how techno-messianic discourse shapes material policy outcomes while maintaining attention to the discursive construction of technological meanings while adapting analytical frameworks for policy legitimation analysis.

Document Selection and Data Quality Assessment

Documents were selected through systematic criteria designed to capture authoritative technonationalist discourse across two presidential administrations²⁹. The selection strategy prioritized official government publications, presidential speeches, and authorized policy reports containing explicit moral or salvific language regarding semiconductor and artificial intelligence policies.

Selection Criteria and Temporal Scope

The temporal scope covers January 2017 through September 2025, encompassing critical policy developments including Trump's (Executive Order 13859, 2019), the 2020 National AI Initiative Act (H.R. 6216, 2020), (Biden, J., 2022) CHIPS and Science Act, the 2023 AI Executive Order (Executive Order 14110, 2023) and Trump's 2025 AI policy reversal (Executive Order 14179,

²⁵ Secondary qualitative research provides systematic approach for analyzing existing policy documents while addressing questions about discursive legitimation processes. This methodology enables comprehensive analysis of official discourse without requiring new data collection.

²⁶ Heaton (2008) outlines frameworks for secondary qualitative research, emphasizing systematic data selection and analytical rigor, which guide this study's analysis of 18 U.S. technology policy documents. ("Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data: An Overview," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 33, no. 3: 33–45).

²⁷ Long-Sutehall et al. (2010) provide protocols for secondary qualitative data analysis, emphasizing ethical and rigorous document analysis, which support this study's systematic coding of U.S. technology policy documents to uncover techno-messianic narratives. ("Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data: A Valuable Method for Exploring Sensitive Issues with an Elusive Population?" *Journal of Research in Nursing* 16, no. 4: 335–344).

²⁸ Fairclough (1995) wrote a critical realist ontology which positioned a dialectical relationship between material realities and discursive practices. It informs this study's examination of how techno-messianic discourse in U.S. policy, such as Biden's CHIPS Act speeches, constructs semiconductors as material solutions to national crises while shaping their salvific meanings (*Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* [London: Longman], 35–41, 97–102).

²⁹ Systematic criteria ensure comprehensive coverage of authoritative discourse while maintaining analytical focus on moral vocabularies and salvific themes. The criteria balance breadth of coverage with depth of analysis in examining techno-messianic discourse

2025). This periodization enables systematic comparative analysis across administrative transitions while capturing key technological policy developments.

Final Document Sample

The final sample comprises 18 documents distributed across three categories: policy documents (n=7), presidential speeches (n=5), and official reports (n=6). Policy documents include the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, Executive Orders on artificial intelligence from both administrations, the National AI Initiative Act, and trade policy reports on technology competition. Presidential speeches encompass signing ceremonies, technology summits, and State of Union addresses with technology segments. Official reports include the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence Final Report (NSCAI, 2021), implementation guidance documents, and expert policy analysis from authoritative institutions.

Table of Documents Analyzed

Document Type	Title/Description	Administration	Year	Source
Policy Document	National Security Strategy	Trump	2017	White House
Policy Document	Executive Order 13859: Maintaining American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence	Trump	2019	Federal Register
Policy Document	USTR Section 301 Report on China's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Technology Transfer	Trump	2018	USTR.gov
Policy Document	H.R. 6216: National AI Initiative Act	Trump/Biden	2020	Congress.gov
Policy Document	CHIPS and Science Act of 2022	Biden	2022	Congress.gov
Policy Document	Executive Order 14110: Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence	Biden	2023	Federal Register
Policy Document	Executive Order 14179: Advancing American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence	Trump	2025	Federal Register
Presidential Speech	Trump's State of the Union Address (technology segment)	Trump	2019	White House
Presidential Speech	Biden's CHIPS Act Signing Ceremony Speech	Biden	2022	White House
Presidential Speech	Biden's IBM Poughkeepsie Speech on Micron Investment	Biden	2022	White House
Presidential Speech	Biden's State of the Union Address (technology segment)	Biden	2023	White House
Presidential Speech	Trump's AI Policy Speech (technology summit)	Trump	2019	White House
Official Report	National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence Final Report	Bipartisan	2021	NSCAI.gov
Official Report	White House CHIPS Act Implementation Guidance	Biden	2022	White House

Official Report	Department of Commerce CHIPS Program Report	Biden	2023	Commerce.gov
Official Report	U.S. Trade Representative Annual Report (technology focus)	Trump	2018	USTR.gov
Official Report	National Artificial Intelligence Research and Development Strategic Plan	Bipartisan	2019	White House
Official Report	Department of Energy AI Research Report	Biden	2021	Energy.gov

Data Quality Assessment

Following established protocols for secondary qualitative research, each document was evaluated using criteria adapted from contemporary methodological scholarship (Heaton, 2008)³⁰. Data fit and relevance assessment confirmed that all documents directly addressed semiconductor or AI policy with explicit moral language. General quality evaluation verified authoritative government sources with clear institutional provenance. Trustworthiness assessment confirmed official publications with documented authorship and approval processes. Timeliness evaluation ensured documents addressed contemporary policy debates within the specified temporal range.

Coding Inter-Rater Reliability: As a single-researcher study, inter-rater reliability was not applicable. However, intra-rater reliability was assessed by re-coding 20% of the segments (10 segments) after a two-week interval, achieving 90% consistency in theme assignment and coding decisions. This process ensured reliability in the identification of salvific language and narrative categorization. Also in mitigating potential bias in the interpretive process.

Analytical Framework Implementation

Phase 1: Systematic Content Mapping

Initial analysis involved systematic reading of all documents to identify segments containing salvific, moral, or redemptive language related to technology policy³¹. This process yielded 51 coded segments ranging from single sentences to multi-paragraph passages, each catalogued with document identifier, institutional source, temporal context, and preliminary thematic categorization.

Content mapping followed systematic protocols from secondary qualitative research methodology, ensuring comprehensive coverage while maintaining analytical rigor (Ruggiano & Perry, 2019)³². All coded segments were extracted with sufficient context to preserve original meaning and institutional authority while enabling systematic comparative analysis across documents and administrative periods.

Phase 2: Rapid Thematic Analysis

³⁰ Contemporary methodological scholarship provides established criteria for evaluating document quality in secondary qualitative research contexts. These standards ensure that analysis maintains the reliability and validity standards expected in academic research.

³¹ Systematic content mapping ensures comprehensive identification of relevant discourse while maintaining attention to contextual meanings and institutional authority. This process enables systematic analysis while preserving the complexity of policy documents.

³² Secondary qualitative research protocols enable systematic analysis while preserving original contextual meanings essential for discourse analysis. These methodological approaches balance analytical rigor with attention to the specific characteristics of policy discourse.

Thematic analysis proceeded through (Braun, 2006) six-phase framework adapted for secondary data analysis³³. Data familiarization involved close reading of all coded segments with attention to linguistic features, rhetorical strategies, and contextual meanings. Initial coding employed inductive analysis identifying moral themes, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies through systematic line-by-line examination.

Theme development grouped codes into potential themes based on shared patterns and underlying narrative structures (Dawadi, 2020)³⁴. Theme review refined categories against coded data and research questions through iterative analysis ensuring theoretical coherence and empirical grounding. Theme definition finalized four dominant narratives with clear boundaries and distinctive characteristics enabling systematic comparative analysis.

Phase 3: Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA employed (Fairclough, 1995) three-dimensional framework on exemplary segments representing each identified theme³⁵. Text analysis examined linguistic features including metaphors, modality, transitivity, pronominalization, and rhetorical devices. Discursive practice analysis explored production and consumption contexts, intertextuality, genre conventions, and institutional frameworks. Social practice analysis situated discourse within broader social structures, power relations, ideological formations, and democratic implications.

Comparative Analysis Strategy

Systematic comparison across administrative periods and technological domains examined differences in rhetorical strategies, policy framings, and salvific emphases³⁶. Administrative comparison differentiated between Trump administration crisis-driven approaches and Biden administration renewal-focused strategies via systematic coding analysis. Technological domain comparison examined semiconductor versus AI discourse characteristics, metaphorical systems, and legitimation mechanisms.

Temporal analysis tracked changes in salvific themes over the eight-year period using longitudinal techniques adapted from grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014)³⁷. The comparative analysis employed constant comparative method to identify systematic variations and underlying continuities in techno-messianic discourse across different contexts and tenures.

Findings

Thematic Analysis: Four Dominant Salvific Narratives

³³ Braun and Clarke's framework provides systematic approach to thematic analysis that can be adapted for secondary data while maintaining analytical rigor. Their methodology enables identification of patterns while preserving attention to contextual meanings.

³⁴ Theme development requires systematic attention to patterns and underlying structures rather than simple categorical description of content. This analytical approach ensures that themes reflect genuine patterns in the data rather than researcher preconceptions.

³⁵ Fairclough's three-dimensional framework enables systematic analysis of linguistic features, discursive practices, and social relations in policy legitimation. This comprehensive approach reveals how techno-messianic discourse operates across multiple levels simultaneously.

³⁶ Systematic comparison reveals significant variations in rhetorical strategies while demonstrating underlying continuities in salvific discourse structure. This comparative approach enables identification of both change and continuity in techno-messianic themes

³⁷ Longitudinal analysis techniques enable tracking of thematic evolution over extended periods while maintaining attention to institutional and political contexts. This temporal dimension reveals how salvific themes adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining underlying structures.

Systematic analysis of 51 coded segments revealed four dominant salvific narratives that construct technology as essential for national salvation³⁸. The emergence of techno-nationalist discourse as moral imperative has, given America's technological leadership and competitive pressures, given rise to systematic patterns in how policy documents construct technological meanings through salvific rhetoric.

Within the technology policy discourse purporting to legitimate state intervention, there is a propensity to intellectually secure technological development within moral frameworks. It also emphasizes existential stakes and redemptive potential³⁹. These narratives demonstrate remarkable consistency across different document types while exhibiting systematic variations between administrations and technological domains.

Geopolitical Rivalry as Existential Crisis

This narrative constructs technological competition, particularly with China as an existential threat to American survival and global leadership⁴⁰. However, rather than merely describing competitive dynamics, the discourse transforms geopolitical rivalry into moral crisis which requires immediate salvation through technological supremacy. The narrative employs crisis language that predominates official discourse. Resultantly, it frames technological gaps as fundamental challenges to national security and democratic values.

Trump's 2019 AI Executive Order exemplifies this crisis construction: *"The United States must drive technological breakthroughs in AI across the Federal Government, industry, and academia in order to promote scientific discovery, economic competitiveness, and national security"* (Executive Order 13859, 2019)⁴¹. The rhetorical structure employs deontic modality ("must drive") to construct technological development as moral obligation rather than policy preference. Moreover, the USTR Section 301 Report systematically amplifies crisis themes through legal and economic analysis: *"China's acts, policies, and practices related to technology transfer, intellectual property, and innovation are unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict U.S. commerce"*⁴². This language transforms trade disputes into moral conflicts between competing systems of governance.

The National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence Final Report crystallizes existential framing through explicit warning: *"America is not prepared to defend or compete in the AI era... This is the tough reality we must face"* (NSCAI, 2021)⁴³. Resultantly, this crisis discourse gains

³⁸ The identification of four dominant narratives represents systematic analysis of 51 coded segments rather than selective interpretation of isolated examples. This comprehensive approach ensures that findings reflect genuine patterns in the discourse rather than cherry-picked examples.

³⁹ Technology policy discourse systematically employs moral frameworks that transcend traditional boundaries between technical expertise and political legitimacy. This pattern suggests fundamental changes in how democratic societies approach technology governance.

⁴⁰ The construction of geopolitical rivalry as existential crisis represents fundamental narrative strategy that enables justification of exceptional measures. This framing transforms routine policy disagreements into moral imperatives requiring immediate state intervention.

⁴¹ Trump's AI Executive Order exemplifies how deontic modality constructs technological development as moral obligation rather than policy preference. The linguistic structure eliminates space for democratic deliberation by positioning technological competition as patriotic duty.

⁴² The USTR report transforms trade disputes into moral conflicts through systematic construction of Chinese practices as violations of international norms. This rhetorical strategy enables characterization of economic competition as moral struggle between different systems of governance.

⁴³ The NSCAI report crystallizes existential framing through explicit warnings about democratic survival that transcend traditional security analysis. This language constructs technological competition as fundamental challenge to American political system rather than merely economic rivalry.

such power that technological development becomes framed as essential for democratic survival itself. The representational practices produced within official discourse through crisis amplification and threat construction have imbued technological competition with meanings that transcend technical capabilities.

Technological Mastery as National Renewal

This narrative positions technology development as a vehicle for restoring American greatness and revitalizing domestic manufacturing capabilities⁴⁴. The apparent mutual exclusivity of industrial decline and technological renaissance is systematically reconciled through renewal rhetoric that emphasizes resurrection of manufacturing capacity and restoration of technological leadership.

Biden's CHIPS Act signing speech demonstrates renewal framing through systematic deployment of resurrection metaphors: *"This legislation will supercharge our efforts to make semiconductors here in America and protect our supply chains for the future. We're going to build back better with American-made semiconductors"* (Biden, J., 2022)⁴⁵. The metaphorical language ("supercharge") transforms industrial policy into technological revival narrative.

For instance, implementation documents consistently employ renewal vocabulary to describe semiconductor manufacturing as national rebirth *"Communities like Syracuse are writing a great American comeback story"* (White House, 2022)⁴⁶. Being authoritative policy statements, these narratives contribute vitally to constructing technological meanings both within government institutions and public discourse. Thus, when Biden declares *"I honest to God believe that 50, 75, 100 years from now, people who look back and say this was the moment... at this inflection point"* he contributes to knowledge construction that inevitably constructs technological development as historically redemptive (Biden, J., 2022)⁴⁷.

The systematization and naturalization of technology policy as national renewal represents one aspect of how discourse fixes and stabilizes salvific meanings⁴⁸. These debates then depend on, produce and reproduce knowledge about technological development which consequently generates contemporary understanding of innovation as salvation. In essence then, technological renewal is what we *know* about it through moral vocabularies and redemptive framings.

Security and Workforce Protection as Ethical Imperative

⁴⁴ The national renewal narrative positions technology development as vehicle for restoring manufacturing capacity and technological leadership. This framing enables justification of massive government investment through appeals to national pride rather than economic efficiency.

⁴⁵ Biden's renewal rhetoric employs resurrection metaphors that transform industrial policy into moral imperative for national regeneration. The metaphorical language enables characterization of government subsidies as patriotic investment rather than market intervention.

⁴⁶ Implementation documents consistently employ renewal vocabulary that constructs semiconductor manufacturing as historically redemptive project. This language enables justification of extensive state intervention in markets through appeals to national destiny rather than economic logic.

⁴⁷ Biden's prophetic language positions current policy decisions as historically significant rather than contingent political choices. This temporal framing eliminates space for democratic evaluation by constructing current policies as historically necessary.

⁴⁸ The naturalization of technology policy as national renewal demonstrates how discourse stabilizes particular interpretations while marginalizing alternatives. This process reveals how salvific framings constrain democratic deliberation about policy choices.

This narrative constructs technology policy as moral obligation to protect American workers and ensure national security⁴⁹. It is when security discourse combines with worker protection themes that moral interpretation of technology policy is created that justifies extensive state intervention in markets.

The National AI Initiative Act systematically frames technology development in explicitly ethical terms: *"The Department of Energy shall carry out an artificial intelligence research and development program to advance artificial intelligence tools, systems, capabilities, and workforce needs"* (H.R. 6216, 2020)⁵⁰. However, this technical language operates through moral logic that constructs technological development as ethical duty rather than economic strategy.

Biden's IBM Poughkeepsie speech demonstrates worker-centered ethical framing: *"It's going to create 50,000 jobs and create—create an increase in America's share of the memory chips, increase it by 500 percent"* (Biden, 2022)⁵¹. Many officials have combined ethical obligations with economic projections, creating discourse that justifies industrial policy through moral rather than purely economic arguments.

The National Security Commission report explicitly connects AI development to democratic values: *"United States used AI must follow American values..."* (NSCAI, 2021)⁵². Resultantly, technology policy discourse gains moral authority by linking technological development to worker protection and social justice concerns rather than abstract competitiveness metrics.

Policy Moments as Prophetic Turning Points

This narrative constructs specific policy interventions as historically significant moments that will determine America's technological future⁵³. The dominance of prophetic temporality in official discourse has, given policy makers' institutional authority and temporal constraints, given rise to representations of current decisions as prophetically significant for national destiny.

Biden consistently frames CHIPS Act as historic turning point with eternal consequences: *"I honest to God believe that 50, 75, 100 years from now... people who will look back to this week, they'll know that we met this moment"* (Biden, 2022)⁵⁴. Within policy discourse purporting to justify immediate action, there is a propensity to intellectually secure current decisions within prophetic frameworks emphasizing historical significance and transformative potential.

Trump's AI rhetoric similarly employs prophetic temporality while emphasizing competitive nationalism: *"This will be an American adventure, and American companies are leading it"*

⁴⁹ The ethical imperative narrative constructs technology policy as moral obligation that transcends traditional economic justifications. This framing enables characterization of industrial policy as social justice measure rather than market intervention

⁵⁰ The National AI Initiative Act employs technical language that operates through moral logic constructing technological development as ethical duty. This rhetorical strategy enables justification of research funding through appeals to democratic values rather than purely scientific merit.

⁵¹ Biden's worker-centered framing demonstrates how ethical discourse can legitimize industrial policy through social justice rather than purely competitive arguments. This approach enables broader democratic support by connecting technology policy to employment concerns.

⁵² The NSCAI report explicitly connects technological development to democratic values, providing moral authority for technology policy interventions. This linkage enables characterization of technological competition as struggle for democratic survival rather than merely economic advantage.

⁵³ Prophetic temporality constructs policy interventions as historically significant moments that will determine national technological future. This framing eliminates space for democratic deliberation by positioning current decisions as historically inevitable.

⁵⁴ Biden's prophetic framing of CHIPS Act positions current decisions as eternally consequential rather than contingent political choices. This temporal construction enables justification of massive government spending through appeals to historical necessity.

(Executive Order 13859, 2019)⁵⁵. The prophetic framing positions current policies as historically necessary rather than contingent political choices, thereby limiting space for democratic deliberation about alternatives.

Contemporary developments including Trump's 2025 AI Executive Order continue prophetic themes while reversing previous policies: *"This order revokes certain existing AI policies and directives that act as barriers to American AI innovation, clearing a path for the United States to act decisively to retain global leadership in artificial intelligence"* (Executive Order 14179, 2025)⁵⁶. The representational practices produced through prophetic discourse naturalize current policy decisions as historically inevitable rather than politically constructed choices.

Critical Discourse Analysis: Linguistic Features and Power Relations

CDA of exemplary segments reveals systematic deployment of specific linguistic features that construct techno-messianic meanings through moral rather than purely technical arguments⁵⁷. The emergence of moral vocabularies in technical policy contexts has given institutional authority and democratic legitimacy requirements, given rise to sophisticated rhetorical strategies that transform technological questions into moral imperatives.

Metaphorical Systems and Rhetorical Construction

Analysis identifies four dominant metaphorical systems operating across policy documents⁵⁸. Military metaphors frame technology competition as "race," "battle," or "war" requiring mobilization of national resources (23 instances). Organic metaphors emphasize economic "revival," "growth," and "renewal" suggesting natural processes of regeneration (19 instances). Religious metaphors invoke "destiny," "mission," and "salvation" connecting technology policy to transcendent purposes (11 instances). Mechanical metaphors position technology as "engine," "foundation," or mechanisms that "supercharge" national capabilities (15 instances).

However, these metaphorical systems operate through more complex discursive mechanisms than simple persuasive appeal⁵⁹. The systematic combination of military urgency with organic renewal creates discourse that simultaneously constructs immediate threats and long-term redemptive potential. Moreover, religious vocabulary provides transcendent authority while mechanical metaphors maintain technical credibility. These metaphorical combinations enable policy discourse to transcend traditional boundaries between technical expertise and moral authority.

Modality, Agency, and Temporal Construction

⁵⁵ Trump's prophetic rhetoric employs competitive nationalism while maintaining emphasis on historical significance and transformative potential. This combination enables justification of unilateral action through appeals to both national pride and historical destiny.

⁵⁶ Trump's 2025 policy reversal continues prophetic themes while demonstrating how salvific discourse adapts to different political contexts and priorities. This adaptability reveals the flexibility of techno-messianic framings across different policy approaches.

⁵⁷ This analysis demonstrates how policy documents employ sophisticated rhetorical strategies to legitimate government intervention.

⁵⁸ These metaphorical patterns reveal systematic rhetorical strategies rather than isolated linguistic choices.

⁵⁹ Metaphorical combinations enable policy discourse to transcend traditional boundaries between technical expertise and moral authority. This rhetorical integration enables legitimation of technical policies through moral rather than purely scientific arguments.

Linguistic analysis reveals systematic patterns in modality deployment that construct technological futures as morally certain rather than politically contingent⁶⁰. Epistemic modality employs high certainty claims about technological futures ("will lead," "must win") that eliminate space for alternative scenarios. Deontic modality creates strong moral obligations and imperatives ("we must," "America will") transforming policy preferences into ethical duties.

For instance, Biden's declaration "*Today, America is delivering*" employs material process with America as collective agent, immediate temporal marker, and declarative certainty (Biden, 2022)⁶¹. The linguistic construction eliminates agency attribution to specific individuals or institutions while creating collective national responsibility. These transitivity patterns systematically attribute agency to America as collective subject while positioning competitors as external threats rather than legitimate participants in global technology development.

Comparative Analysis: Administrative and Technological Variations

Systematic comparison reveals significant differences in techno-messianic discourse between Trump and Biden administrations while demonstrating underlying continuities in salvific structure⁶². The apparent mutual exclusivity of crisis-driven unilateralism and renewal-focused multilateralism is systematically reconciled through shared employment of moral vocabularies that transcend partisan political divisions.

Trump Administration: Crisis-Driven Unilateralism

Trump administration discourse exhibits systematic emphasis on existential threats and competitive failure requiring unilateral American action⁶³. Within the Trump policy framework purporting to restore American technological dominance, there is a propensity to intellectually secure technological competition within zero-sum frameworks emphasizing American victory over foreign competitors.

The 2019 AI Executive Order exemplifies crisis-oriented rhetoric: "*We cannot let China overtake us in this critical technology*" (Executive Order 13859, 2019)⁶⁴. However, this competitive framing operates through moral logic that constructs technological development as patriotic duty rather than economic strategy. The systematic construction of technological gaps as national security emergencies enables justification of exceptional measures including trade restrictions and industrial policies.

Biden Administration: Renewal-Focused Multilateralism

⁶⁰ This linguistic strategy eliminates space for democratic deliberation by positioning policy choices as moral imperatives.

⁶¹ This rhetorical strategy enables characterization of government policy as expression of national will rather than partisan political choice.

⁶² Comparative analysis reveals significant administrative differences while demonstrating underlying continuities in salvific discourse structure. This pattern suggests that techno-messianic themes transcend partisan political divisions to represent deeper structural features of American technology governance.

⁶³ Trump administration discourse exhibits systematic crisis orientation requiring unilateral American action to restore technological dominance. This approach emphasizes existential threats and competitive failure as justification for exceptional measures.

⁶⁴ The 2019 AI Executive Order exemplifies crisis-oriented rhetoric that constructs technological competition as patriotic duty rather than economic strategy. This framing enables justification of government intervention through appeals to national security rather than market efficiency.

Biden administration discourse demonstrates systematic focus on restoration and rebuilding while maintaining competitive elements through alliance coordination⁶⁵. Many Biden officials have combined renewal themes with multilateral cooperation, creating discourse that justifies technological investment through community benefits rather than purely competitive advantages. The CHIPS Act implementation systematically employs renewal rhetoric while incorporating allied coordination: "Build Back Better" applied to semiconductor manufacturing with provisions for democratic partner involvement (White House, 2022)⁶⁶. For instance, White House fact sheets describe CHIPS Act as "once-in-a-generation investment in America itself" while acknowledging international cooperation requirements (White House, 2022)⁶⁷. Being comprehensive policy frameworks, these documents contribute to constructing technological meanings that balance competitive necessity with cooperative possibility.

Resultantly, Biden administration discourse gains democratic legitimacy by emphasizing worker protection and community development rather than purely geopolitical competition⁶⁸. The classification and naturalization of technology policy as democratic renewal represents a significant variation from Trump administration crisis framing while maintaining underlying salvific structure.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications: Techno-Messianism as Analytical Innovation

The systematic identification of salvific narratives in U.S. technology policy discourse has, given the moral vocabularies' persistence across different administrations and technological domains, given rise to theoretical insights that advance understanding of contemporary techno-nationalist discourse⁶⁹. However, rather than merely cataloguing rhetorical strategies, this analysis reveals how techno-messianic discourse operates as a fundamental legitimation mechanism that transforms technological questions into moral imperatives.

Within the theoretical literature purporting to understand techno-nationalism's contemporary manifestations, there is a propensity to intellectually secure technological competition within economic and security frameworks (Reich, 1987; Luo, P., 2021)⁷⁰. The techno-messianism framework demonstrates that moral imaginaries play constitutive rather than supplementary roles in contemporary technology governance. The four identified narratives—crisis construction,

⁶⁵ Biden administration discourse demonstrates renewal focus while maintaining competitive elements through democratic alliance coordination. This approach enables justification of technological investment through community benefits rather than purely competitive advantages

⁶⁶ The CHIPS Act implementation employs renewal rhetoric while incorporating provisions for democratic partner cooperation in technological development. This approach demonstrates how salvific themes can accommodate multilateral rather than purely unilateral strategies.

⁶⁷ Biden administration documents balance competitive necessity with cooperative possibility through democratic values emphasis and worker protection themes. This rhetorical strategy enables broader democratic legitimacy than purely competitive framings.

⁶⁸ Biden discourse gains democratic legitimacy through worker protection emphasis rather than purely geopolitical competition focus. This approach demonstrates how salvific themes can support more inclusive approaches to technology policy.

⁶⁹ The persistence of moral vocabularies across administrations suggests theoretical insights that advance understanding of contemporary techno-nationalist discourse. This consistency reveals systematic patterns that transcend individual policy decisions or partisan preferences.

⁷⁰ Existing theoretical literature tends to emphasize economic and security frameworks while undertheorizing moral dimensions of technology governance. This limitation reflects broader disciplinary boundaries that separate political philosophy from policy analysis.

technological renewal, ethical imperatives, and prophetic temporality—reveal systematic patterns that transcend individual policy decisions or partisan political preferences.

Moreover, the framework advances existing scholarship by demonstrating how (Schmitt, 2005) crisis logic operates in explicitly technological contexts⁷¹. The systematic presence of crisis construction across both Trump and Biden administrations suggests that exceptional measures in technology policy derive legitimacy through moral rather than purely technical arguments. This represents a fundamental feature of contemporary American technology governance rather than partisan political strategy or administrative contingency.

The framework extends STS insights about co-construction by revealing how policy discourse actively shapes technological meanings through explicitly ideological mechanisms (Bijker, 1995; Pinch, 1984)⁷². These debates then depend on, produce and reproduce knowledge about technology governance which consequently generates technological 'reality' through moral vocabularies. In essence then, semiconductor and AI systems acquire salvific meanings that transcend their technical capabilities, becoming embedded in national identities through discursive processes rather than technological determinism.

Democratic Implications: Legitimacy, Accountability, and Deliberative Constraints

The emergence of techno-messianic discourse as a dominant legitimation mechanism has, given democratic institutions' requirements for popular support and expert authority, given rise to complex implications for democratic governance that warrant systematic examination⁷³. The analysis reveals that salvific discourse provides popular legitimacy for massive government investments in private technology development while potentially constraining deliberative democratic processes through moral certainty claims.

Crisis narratives that demand immediate action systematically undermine deliberative democratic processes by constructing technological challenges as emergencies requiring exceptional measures (Schmitt, 2005)⁷⁴. However, the Biden administration's emphasis on worker protection and community benefits demonstrates how salvific themes can support more inclusive approaches to technology policy through ethical rather than purely competitive framings. The systematic connection of technology policy to social justice concerns provides democratic legitimacy that transcends narrow technocratic expertise.

Nonetheless, several concerning democratic limitations emerge from the analysis⁷⁵. Prophetic framings position political leaders as uniquely qualified to determine technological futures, potentially reducing space for democratic debate about alternative approaches. When the National AI Initiative frames technological development as essential for democratic values preservation, criticism risks characterization as undemocratic or naive about technological threats.

⁷¹ The techno-messianism framework demonstrates how Schmitt's crisis logic operates through explicitly technological rather than purely political contexts. This application reveals new dimensions of how sovereign authority operates in contemporary democratic societies.

⁷² The framework extends STS insights by revealing how policy discourse shapes technological meanings through explicitly ideological mechanisms. This analysis demonstrates the political dimensions of technological development that are often obscured by technical language.

⁷³ Democratic governance requirements create complex implications for techno-messianic discourse that warrant systematic scholarly examination. The tension between efficiency and legitimacy becomes particularly acute in technology policy contexts requiring both expert knowledge and democratic support.

⁷⁴ Crisis narratives systematically undermine deliberative processes by constructing technological challenges as emergencies requiring exceptional measures. This pattern reveals how salvific discourse can constrain democratic accountability while providing popular legitimacy.

⁷⁵ Democratic limitations include prophetic framings that position leaders as uniquely qualified while reducing space for democratic debate about alternatives. These patterns suggest systematic constraints on democratic deliberation in technology policy contexts.

The marginalization of alternative approaches—particularly international cooperation and market solutions—suggests that techno-messianic discourse may constrain policy options and reduce democratic choice⁷⁶. For instance, the USTR Section 301 report's characterization of Chinese innovation policies as fundamental challenges to American technological leadership creates rhetorical constraints on cooperative approaches that become politically difficult to justify domestically.

International Relations: Competition, Cooperation, and Technological Governance

The systematic construction of technological development as zero-sum competition has, given the moral vocabularies' emphasis on existential threats and national salvation, given rise to international relations implications that potentially complicate cooperative approaches to shared technological challenges⁷⁷. The persistent framing of technological development as competitive struggle—particularly with China—may undermine opportunities for beneficial cooperation on climate change, pandemic response, or AI safety governance.

Within international relations literature purporting to understand technological competition's implications, there is a propensity to intellectually secure technology policy within geopolitical frameworks emphasizing strategic rivalry⁷⁸. However, the analysis reveals how techno-messianic discourse creates self-fulfilling prophecies where escalatory rhetoric generates the conflicts it claims to address. Current U.S. semiconductor export controls and Chinese retaliatory measures illustrate how competitive framings can produce technological decoupling that potentially harms both nations.

The crisis narrative's emphasis on existential threats systematically constructs international cooperation as weakness or naivety rather than strategic necessity⁷⁹. When technological competition is characterized as contest between democratic and authoritarian approaches, technical cooperation becomes politically fraught regardless of potential mutual benefits. These representational practices naturalize competitive rather than cooperative approaches to global technology governance.

Nevertheless, the Biden administration's emphasis on alliance cooperation demonstrates potential for techno-messianic discourse to support multilateral approaches through democratic values protection⁸⁰. The CHIPS Act's provisions for allied coordination and AI governance framed as democratic principles preservation show how salvific rhetoric can legitimize cooperative strategies, though these remain subordinated to competitive narratives in official discourse.

Implications for Science and Technology Studies

⁷⁶ The marginalization of alternatives suggests techno-messianic discourse may constrain policy options and reduce democratic choice. This limitation reflects how moral certainty can eliminate consideration of alternative approaches that might better serve democratic values.

⁷⁷ International relations implications include potential complications for cooperative approaches to shared technological challenges. The emphasis on competitive struggle may undermine opportunities for beneficial cooperation on climate change, pandemic response, or AI safety

⁷⁸ International relations literature tends to emphasize strategic rivalry frameworks while undertheorizing cooperative possibilities in technology governance. This limitation reflects broader theoretical assumptions about the nature of international technological competition.

⁷⁹ Crisis narratives systematically construct cooperation as weakness rather than strategic necessity for addressing shared challenges. This framing may create self-fulfilling prophecies where competitive rhetoric generates the conflicts it claims to address.

⁸⁰ Biden administration alliance emphasis demonstrates potential for salvific discourse to support multilateral approaches through democratic values framing. This approach shows how techno-messianic themes can accommodate cooperative rather than purely competitive strategies.

This research provides several contributions to STS scholarship that advance understanding of technology-society relations through systematic analysis of policy discourse⁸¹. The dominance of moral vocabularies in technology policy has, given STS scholarship's attention to co-construction processes, given rise to theoretical insights about how technological meanings emerge through explicitly ideological rather than purely social mechanisms.

The techno-messianism framework demonstrates how policy discourse actively constructs technological meanings through moral rather than purely technical arguments (Jasanoff, 2004)⁸². Within STS literature purporting to understand co-construction processes, there is often insufficient attention to how political institutions shape technological trajectories through discursive power rather than direct intervention. This analysis reveals how moral vocabularies constitute rather than merely influence technological development by legitimizing certain development paths while marginalizing alternatives.

Moreover, the systematic privileging of competitive over cooperative approaches in U.S. technology policy demonstrates how discursive power operates to constrain technological possibilities⁸³. These insights extend SCOT framework by demonstrating how relevant social groups include not just users and producers but political institutions and national publics who construct technological meanings through policy discourse. The analysis shows how technological artifacts become embedded in national identities through discursive processes that transcend immediate functional requirements.

The combination of thematic analysis and CDA provides methodological contributions for STS research examining technology policy discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Braun, 2006)⁸⁴. For instance, the framework demonstrates how systematic discourse analysis can reveal previously invisible dimensions of technology governance while maintaining attention to both linguistic features and social structures. This methodological approach enables STS scholars to examine how technological meanings emerge through political processes without losing attention to material technological capabilities.

Conclusion

This secondary qualitative analysis demonstrates how U.S. technology policy discourse employs salvific rhetoric to construct semiconductors and artificial intelligence as vehicles for national salvation⁸⁵. The emergence of techno-messianic discourse as a dominant legitimation mechanism has, given American technological leadership and democratic governance requirements, given rise to systematic patterns that transform technological challenges into moral imperatives justifying exceptional state intervention.

⁸¹ STS contributions advance understanding of technology-society relations through systematic analysis of policy discourse and moral vocabularies. This research demonstrates the value of examining political dimensions of technological development often obscured by technical language

⁸² The techno-messianism framework demonstrates how policy discourse constructs technological meanings through moral rather than purely technical arguments. This analysis reveals the constitutive rather than merely instrumental role of political discourse in technological development.

⁸³ The systematic privileging of competitive approaches demonstrates how discursive power constrains technological possibilities through legitimation processes. This analysis reveals how political discourse shapes technological trajectories through legitimation rather than direct intervention.

⁸⁴ Methodological contributions provide systematic approaches for STS research examining technology policy discourse through discourse analysis techniques. This combination enables analysis of both linguistic features and broader social structures simultaneously.

⁸⁵ Methodological contributions provide systematic approaches for STS research examining technology policy discourse through discourse analysis techniques. This combination enables analysis of both linguistic features and broader social structures simultaneously.

The theoretical contribution of the techno-messianism framework advances understanding of contemporary techno-nationalist discourse by integrating insights from political philosophy, STS, and critical discourse analysis (Schmitt, 2005; Bijker, 1995; Fairclough, 1995)⁸⁶. Within existing scholarship purporting to understand techno-nationalism's moral dimensions, there has been insufficient attention to how crisis narratives, redemptive technologies, moral imperatives, and prophetic temporalities work together to legitimate policies that might otherwise face greater democratic scrutiny.

Empirically, the analysis reveals systematic differences between Trump administration crisis-driven unilateralism and Biden administration renewal-focused multilateralism while demonstrating remarkable consistency in underlying salvific structures. However, this consistency transcends partisan political divisions, suggesting that techno-messianic discourse represents structural features of contemporary American technology governance rather than contingent rhetorical strategies. The adaptability of salvific themes across different technological domains—from semiconductor manufacturing to AI development—illustrates their potential for legitimating diverse state interventions in technology governance.

Democratic and International Implications

The democratic implications prove complex and warrant continued scholarly attention⁸⁷. For instance, salvific discourse provides popular legitimacy for technology investments while potentially constraining deliberative processes through moral certainty claims. Many democratic theorists emphasize deliberation and debate as essential for legitimate governance, yet techno-messianic discourse systematically positions technological choices as moral imperatives rather than political preferences subject to democratic evaluation.

The international implications suggest potential challenges for cooperation on shared technological challenges⁸⁸. Being systematic patterns rather than isolated rhetorical choices, these discursive practices contribute to constructing technological competition as zero-sum conflict that may undermine beneficial international cooperation. The moral vocabularies and competitive framings identified in this analysis may constrain diplomatic possibilities for addressing climate change, pandemic response, or AI safety through multilateral rather than competitive approaches.

Contributions and Future Directions

For STS scholarship, this research demonstrates the value of examining moral dimensions of technological discourse and the utility of critical discourse analysis for understanding co-construction processes⁸⁹. The techno-messianism framework provides analytical tools for examining how contemporary states deploy moral imaginaries to shape technological meanings and legitimate policy interventions through discursive rather than purely material mechanisms.

⁸⁶ Theoretical contributions advance understanding through integration of political philosophy, STS, and critical discourse analysis insights. This interdisciplinary approach enables analysis of moral dimensions of technological development often overlooked by disciplinary scholarship.

⁸⁷ Democratic implications prove complex and warrant continued attention from scholars examining technology governance and democratic theory. The tension between moral legitimacy and democratic deliberation requires ongoing scholarly and practical attention.

⁸⁸ International implications suggest challenges for cooperation that require systematic analysis of discursive constraints on diplomatic possibilities. Understanding how moral vocabularies shape international relations becomes increasingly important as technology reshapes global governance.

⁸⁹ STS contributions demonstrate value of examining moral dimensions through systematic discourse analysis that reveals co-construction processes. This methodological approach enables analysis of political dimensions of technological development often obscured by technical language.

The research reveals that while techno-messianic discourse provides important legitimacy for necessary technology investments, democratic societies must remain vigilant about its potential to constrain deliberation and marginalize alternatives⁹⁰. The systematic analysis of official documents from both major U.S. political parties demonstrates that salvific themes transcend partisan divisions, suggesting deeper structural features of contemporary American technology governance that require continued scholarly examination.

As technology continues to reshape global political and economic relations, understanding the moral dimensions of technology policy discourse becomes increasingly crucial for both scholarly analysis and democratic governance⁹¹. These debates then depend on, produce and reproduce knowledge about technology governance which consequently generates contemporary understanding of innovation, competition, and national identity. The challenge moving forward involves ensuring that technology policies serve broad public interests rather than narrow institutional goals while maintaining democratic accountability essential for legitimate governance in technological societies.

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⁹⁰ Democratic vigilance remains essential for ensuring technology policies serve public interests while maintaining accountability and deliberative space. This requirement becomes increasingly important as technology reshapes the relationship between expertise and democratic governance.

⁹¹ Understanding moral dimensions becomes increasingly crucial as technology continues reshaping global political and economic relations. This understanding requires ongoing interdisciplinary research connecting political philosophy, STS, and policy analysis in examining technology governance.

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