

**Qatar's Technopian Embrace of the Global US-China AI Race:
A Content Analysis of Qatar's Government Multi-Aligned AI Investments**

Team Paper

Maryam Kafoud, Dalal Al Romaini

Stratcom 311 Applied Research Methods

Dr. Mohammed Ibahrine

Northwestern University in Qatar

June 23, 2026

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Qatar’s Technopian Embrace of the Global US-China AI Race	4
Literature Review	6
AI and Global Power Competition	6
Technological Statecraft	7
Hedging and Small-State Strategy	7
AI Sovereignty Paradox and Technological Dependence	8
Qatar’s Digital Transformation and National AI Strategy	9
Theoretical Framework	12
Research Question	14
Methodology	14
Findings	16
Table 1. Chi-square test between rhetorical framing and investment motivation	16
Table 2. Chi-square test between initiative status and geopolitical orientation	17
Table 3. Chi-square test between initiative status and type of AI technology	18
Table 4. Chi-square test between type of AI technology and geopolitical orientation	20
Discussion	21
References	23
Appendix	25
Appendix A: Codebook	25
Appendix B: Coding Sheet Template	26
Appendix C: JASP Data Collection Table	26

Abstract

This study evaluates Qatar's strategic positioning within the global competition between the United States and China for leadership in artificial intelligence through a quantitative content analysis of state official documents and reports regarding AI and smart-tech national strategies. Grounded in the theory of technological statecraft, the study explores how the state utilizes digital governance as an instrument of foreign policy to preserve national agency in a multipolar AI order dominated by the US and China. The findings reveal a strategy of multi-alignment operationalized through technological layering, wherein Qatar strategically distributes specific components of its national infrastructure among the competing powers. Specifically, the state delegates physical hardware to Chinese providers while relying on US-based firms for frontier software and high-level cloud services. Concurrently, to mitigate the sovereignty paradox inherent in adopting foreign technology, Qatar integrates homegrown AI-model initiatives to ensure its cultural and linguistic autonomy. By treating AI as a pervasive general-purpose technology the state ensures its AI investments satisfy its own outlined national goals of the National Vision 2030.

Keywords: Qatar, US-China AI race, AI-sovereignty, technological layering, multi-allignment

Qatar's Technopian Embrace of the Global US-China AI Race:

A Content Analysis of Qatar's Government Multi-Aligned AI Investments

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become one of the most significant technologies shaping contemporary international politics, economic development, and national competitiveness. Increasingly viewed as a general-purpose technology, AI extends beyond technical innovation and influences governance, security, healthcare, education, and economic productivity (Deligöz, 2024). As a result, competition over AI development has emerged as a central dimension of the broader strategic rivalry between the United States and China. Both powers seek to expand their technological influence through investments in cloud infrastructure, advanced computing systems, digital ecosystems, and AI-related partnerships across the globe (Miller & Wright, 2025). The growing importance of AI has created new opportunities and challenges for smaller states. While AI offers pathways toward economic diversification and modernization, reliance on foreign technologies may also generate concerns regarding technological dependence and national sovereignty. Consequently, states are increasingly required to balance the benefits of international technological cooperation with the desire to maintain domestic control over critical digital infrastructure and data systems (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2026).

Within the Gulf region, Qatar represents a particularly significant case. Guided by Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Qatar National Artificial Intelligence Strategy, the country has identified AI as a central component of its transition toward a knowledge-based economy (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2019). Through investments in smart governance, digital transformation, cloud computing, research initiatives, and AI workforce development, Qatar seeks to position itself as a regional leader in technological innovation.

Simultaneously, the country maintains strategic partnerships with both American and Chinese technology providers, allowing it to access diverse technological ecosystems while avoiding excessive dependence on a single actor (Bakir & Al-Shamari, 2025).

Recent scholarship suggests that Gulf states increasingly navigate the US–China rivalry through strategies of hedging and technological diversification (Bakir & Al-Shamari, 2025; Miller & Wright, 2025). Rather than choosing between competing powers, these states selectively engage with both sides to maximize economic and strategic benefits. In Qatar’s case, this approach is visible through partnerships with American firms such as Microsoft and Google alongside infrastructure and telecommunications collaborations involving Chinese companies such as Huawei. Despite growing academic attention to AI governance and technological competition, limited research has systematically examined how Qatar articulates its AI strategy through official government discourse. This study addresses this gap by conducting a quantitative content analysis of official policy documents, strategic frameworks, institutional reports, and investment announcements. Specifically, the study examines how Qatar frames its AI ambitions, which geopolitical partnerships are emphasized, what motivations are associated with AI adoption, and how concerns regarding sovereignty and national development are integrated into official discourse. By analyzing Qatar’s AI investments through the combined perspectives of technological statecraft and hedging theory, this study argues that Qatar pursues a strategy of technological multi-alignment. Through selective engagement with both American and Chinese technological ecosystems while simultaneously investing in domestic capabilities, Qatar seeks to maximize the benefits of global technological competition while preserving national autonomy.

Literature Review

AI and Global Power Competition

Artificial intelligence has increasingly become a strategic arena of international competition. Scholars argue that AI functions not only as a technological innovation but also as a source of geopolitical influence capable of shaping economic growth, military capabilities, and national competitiveness (Deligöz, 2024). Consequently, the United States and China have emerged as the primary actors in a global contest for technological leadership, investing heavily in AI research, digital infrastructure, cloud computing, and advanced technological ecosystems. According to Deligöz (2024), technological competition between Washington and Beijing reflects a broader transformation in international relations, where technology has become a central instrument of state power. Rather than relying exclusively on traditional economic or military tools, states increasingly utilize technological capabilities to advance strategic interests and influence international outcomes. This transformation has elevated AI from a purely technical field to a geopolitical asset. Within the Gulf region, the effects of this competition are increasingly visible. Miller and Wright (2025) argue that the Arab Gulf has become an important arena in which both the United States and China seek to expand their technological influence. Through infrastructure projects, cloud services, AI partnerships, and digital investments, both powers compete to integrate Gulf states into their respective technological ecosystems.

Technological Statecraft

The concept of technological statecraft provides a useful framework for understanding the strategic significance of AI investments. Technological statecraft refers to the use of technology, innovation systems, digital infrastructure, and technological partnerships as

instruments of national power and foreign policy (Deligöz, 2024). Under this perspective, technological capabilities are viewed as strategic resources that can strengthen economic competitiveness, enhance security, and increase geopolitical influence. Miller and Wright (2025) argue that AI ecosystems have become important components of contemporary technological statecraft. States increasingly use technological partnerships and investments to secure strategic advantages and strengthen international influence. Similarly, Dahdal and Abdel Ghafar (2025) describe the emergence of “tech diplomacy,” whereby states utilize technological adoption and digital regulatory frameworks as tools for advancing broader geopolitical objectives. Within the Middle East and North Africa region, technological statecraft is increasingly visible through investments in digital transformation, smart-city development, telecommunications infrastructure, and AI innovation. As states seek to position themselves within the emerging global digital economy, technology has become closely linked to broader foreign policy and development objectives.

Hedging and Small-State Strategy

The behavior of smaller states facing competition between major powers is often explained through hedging theory. Hedging refers to a strategy whereby states avoid exclusive alignment with a single power and instead maintain diversified relationships with multiple actors. This approach allows states to maximize opportunities while minimizing strategic vulnerabilities. Bakir and Al-Shamari (2025) argue that Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates increasingly employ hedging strategies in response to intensifying US–China competition. Rather than choosing one side, Gulf states seek to preserve strategic flexibility by engaging simultaneously with both powers. Such behavior enables them to benefit from technological, economic, and security cooperation without becoming overly dependent on a

single partner. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of AI development. Because technological ecosystems are increasingly linked to geopolitical competition, states must carefully balance competing partnerships. Hedging allows smaller states to access diverse technological resources while preserving autonomy in foreign policy decision-making.

AI Sovereignty Paradox and Technological Dependence

As governments become increasingly reliant on foreign technology providers, concerns regarding technological sovereignty have gained prominence. AI sovereignty refers to a state's ability to maintain control over critical digital infrastructure, data governance systems, and technological decision-making processes. While international partnerships provide access to expertise and innovation, they may also create dependencies that limit national autonomy. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (2026) argues that Gulf countries face a technological sovereignty dilemma; although digital transformation requires engagement with global technology firms, excessive dependence on foreign providers may expose states to strategic vulnerabilities. This inherent tension is described as the "AI sovereignty paradox," where the drive to rapidly modernize through external partnerships simultaneously risks eroding the domestic oversight necessary to define national security and ethical standards (Al-Hashedi, 2025). Furthermore, research suggests that this paradox necessitates a "double-bind" policy approach, requiring states to aggressively incentivize foreign tech investment while simultaneously mandating strict localization of data and algorithmic governance to preclude external manipulation. This challenge has encouraged governments to invest in localized capabilities, national innovation ecosystems, and domestic AI initiatives. Dahdal and Abdel Ghafar (2025) similarly note that emerging digital regulations across the MENA region increasingly reflect concerns regarding sovereignty, governance, and technological dependence.

Consequently, many states seek to balance foreign technological cooperation with domestic capacity-building efforts.

Qatar's Digital Transformation and National AI Strategy

Qatar's approach to artificial intelligence is closely linked to its broader national development agenda and its ambition to transition from a hydrocarbon-dependent economy to a diversified knowledge-based economy. Guided by Qatar National Vision 2030, the state has increasingly positioned digital transformation and technological innovation as key drivers of economic growth, government efficiency, and international competitiveness. This commitment was formally articulated through the Qatar National Artificial Intelligence Strategy, which established a comprehensive framework for integrating AI across multiple sectors of society and governance (MCIT, 2019).

The National Artificial Intelligence Strategy is organized around six strategic pillars designed to guide the country's transition toward an "AI+X" future. The first pillar, Race for Talent in the AI+X Era, emphasizes education, workforce development, and the cultivation of specialized AI skills. The strategy argues that Qatar must simultaneously develop domestic expertise while attracting international talent in order to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving technological landscape (MCIT, 2019). This focus reflects the state's broader commitment to human capital development and knowledge creation.

The second pillar, Data Access is Paramount, identifies data as a critical strategic resource necessary for AI development. The strategy advocates for governance frameworks that facilitate data sharing while ensuring privacy and security protections. By treating data as a national asset, Qatar seeks to create the conditions necessary for AI innovation while maintaining

oversight over critical digital resources (MCIT, 2019). This emphasis on data governance also reflects broader concerns regarding digital sovereignty and technological independence. The third pillar addresses the changing landscape of employment. Rather than viewing AI solely as a replacement for human labor, the strategy promotes the augmentation of human capabilities through technological integration. The document emphasizes workforce adaptation, reskilling, and the development of AI competencies that allow citizens to participate effectively in an increasingly digital economy (MCIT, 2019). This approach reflects the state's recognition that successful technological transformation depends on preparing workers for emerging economic realities. The fourth pillar focuses on new business and economic opportunities. The strategy seeks to encourage AI adoption among existing firms while simultaneously fostering the development of AI-driven startups and entrepreneurial ventures. Through regulatory reform, infrastructure investment, and innovation support mechanisms, Qatar aims to position itself as a regional hub for technological development and investment (MCIT, 2019). This objective aligns closely with the broader economic diversification goals outlined in Qatar National Vision 2030. The fifth pillar identifies strategic research areas where Qatar seeks to establish global leadership and develop localized technological solutions. These priority areas include Arabic language processing, national security, precision medicine, transportation, food security, and the oil and gas sector (MCIT, 2019). The inclusion of these sectors demonstrates that Qatar views AI not only as a tool for economic modernization but also as a mechanism for addressing national challenges and advancing strategic interests. Finally, the sixth pillar emphasizes ethics and public policy. The strategy advocates for the development of AI governance frameworks rooted in local social, cultural, and religious values. Principles such as transparency, accountability, fairness, and explainability are presented as essential requirements for responsible AI deployment (MCIT,

2019). This reflects a growing recognition that technological advancement must be accompanied by ethical oversight and public trust.

Recent scholarship suggests that Qatar's AI initiatives have expanded significantly since the introduction of the strategy. Ismail (2026) highlights the growing integration of AI technologies within Qatar's healthcare sector, demonstrating how national AI investments are increasingly contributing to innovation and sustainable development objectives. At the same time, Qatar continues to develop partnerships with both American and Chinese technology providers while investing in domestic research initiatives and national AI capabilities. These developments suggest that Qatar's AI strategy extends beyond technological adoption and reflects broader goals related to economic diversification, workforce development, technological sovereignty, and international competitiveness.

Taken together, the six pillars of the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy provide a useful framework for understanding the motivations underlying Qatar's AI investments. They demonstrate that the state's AI agenda is simultaneously economic, social, political, and strategic. Furthermore, these pillars correspond directly to the categories analyzed in this study, including economic diversification, labor development, AI sovereignty, and national strategic priorities, making them particularly relevant for examining how Qatar frames its position within the broader US–China AI competition.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a combined theoretical framework based on technological statecraft and hedging theory. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive explanation of how Qatar navigates the evolving geopolitical landscape surrounding artificial intelligence.

Technological statecraft argues that technology has become a critical instrument of national power and international influence (Deligöz, 2024). Rather than serving exclusively economic purposes, technological infrastructure, digital ecosystems, AI capabilities, and innovation networks increasingly function as strategic assets that contribute to national competitiveness and geopolitical influence. Within the context of the global AI race, technological statecraft explains how governments leverage technological investments and partnerships to advance broader political, economic, and security objectives. The framework is particularly relevant to understanding the behavior of both major and smaller powers. Miller and Wright (2025) demonstrate that AI ecosystems have become important components of geopolitical competition, with states seeking influence through technological partnerships, infrastructure investments, and digital governance systems. Similarly, Dahdal and Abdel Ghafar (2025) argue that technology adoption and digital regulation have become increasingly integrated into contemporary foreign policy strategies.

However, technological statecraft alone does not fully explain how smaller states respond to competition between major powers. For this reason, the study also incorporates hedging theory. Hedging theory suggests that states facing uncertainty in the international system often avoid exclusive alignment and instead pursue diversified relationships with competing powers (Bakir & Al-Shamari, 2025). This strategy allows states to maximize opportunities while minimizing risks associated with dependence on any single actor. Applied to Qatar, these theories suggest the existence of a strategy that may be described as technological multi-alignment. Rather than selecting either the American or Chinese technological ecosystem, Qatar selectively engages both. Chinese firms contribute significantly to telecommunications infrastructure and smart-city development, while American companies provide cloud services,

advanced software solutions, and frontier AI technologies. Simultaneously, Qatar invests in domestic initiatives aimed at strengthening national AI capabilities and reducing long-term technological dependence (MCIT, 2019).

Based on this framework, four expectations guide the analysis. First, official documents should demonstrate evidence of partnerships with both American and Chinese technology providers. Second, AI investments should be consistently connected to national development goals, particularly economic diversification and innovation. Third, official discourse should predominantly reflect technopian framing, emphasizing opportunity, modernization, and progress rather than technological risks. Finally, references to AI sovereignty, domestic innovation, and local capacity building should appear with increasing frequency as Qatar seeks to balance foreign partnerships with national autonomy (IISS, 2026). By combining technological statecraft and hedging theory, this framework provides a useful lens for understanding Qatar's position within the global AI race. Rather than viewing AI investments solely as economic decisions, the framework highlights how technological partnerships function simultaneously as instruments of development, diplomacy, and strategic autonomy.

Research Question

How does Qatar position itself as a strategic actor within the context of US–China AI competition? Specifically, what alliances, investments, and governance choices reflect a deliberate strategy of technological multi-alignment, and what opportunities and risks emerge from this approach?

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative content analysis to evaluate Qatar's strategic positioning within the global AI innovation race dominated by the US and China. Content analysis offers a systematic, objective method to deconstruct language, framing, and operational choices across official state records, directly serving the core research question: how a small state utilizes digital governance to maintain national agency in a multipolar order. The primary sample consists of a targeted census of 30 official documents and institutional disclosures published by the State of Qatar between 2019 and 2026. This dataset spans three distinct categories: foundational national frameworks (e.g., Qatar National Vision 2030, Digital Agenda 2030), regulatory and ethical mandates from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA), and operational investment data from the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), QatarEnergy, and Ooredoo. Selecting these specific primary sources is theoretically justified under the lens of technological statecraft. Because state agency is articulated through official policy and enacted via sovereign capital, analyzing these texts exposes the actual mechanics of Qatar's technological layering. This study includes five main variables which identify the specific operational mechanics of Qatar's multi-alignment strategy. Geopolitical orientation tracks the alignment of Qatari initiatives with global powers, categorized as US-Aligned which would include partnerships with Microsoft, Google, or OpenAI, whereas China/Asia-Aligned involves Qatar's deals with dominant tech companies like Huawei, while hedging is exemplified by the rhetoric framing of Qatar as a neutral "global hub" for AI innovation. The motivation variable categorizes the state's rationale to invest in AI innovation based on different pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030. Notably, this coding variable was informed by the priorities outlined in Qatar's National Artificial Intelligence Strategy, targeting its emphasis on talent development, employment

transformation, economic innovation, research leadership, and national capacity building (MCIT, 2019). The framing variable measures the rhetorical weighting of technology, whether the state adopts a technopian view of AI as primarily advantageous or whether investments are motivated by fears of risk, reflecting another luddite view on AI (Youn & Jin, 2021). The initiative status variable distinguishes whether the goals and investments outlined within official documents are broad statements of intent or whether there are outlined mechanisms for implementation. The final variable which distinguishes between Qatar's various foreign-AI partnerships, categorizing investments between physical hardware infrastructure, software and cloud-based technology, or investment in building regulatory frameworks. While rigorous, the methodology carries distinct limitations. First, because the corpus is a targeted census of 30 high-level strategic texts rather than a massive statistical sample, the absolute sample size is small and all variables are nominal, requiring the use of exact non-parametric testing in JASP to ensure mathematical validity. Second, the dataset relies entirely on public-facing government documentation and press disclosures. It inevitably omits classified state security parameters, proprietary investment details, and private diplomatic backchannels that may influence Qatar's true geopolitical positioning. Finally, content analysis risks subjective coder bias, a limitation mitigated here by enforcing rigid operational definitions within the codebook to ensure systematic data classification.

Findings

Table 1. Chi-square test between rhetorical framing and investment motivation

<i>Contingency Tables</i>				
Framing	Motivation			Total
	Economic Diversification	AI Sovereignty	Social/Human Capital	
Technopian	24	3	1	28
Luddite	0	2	0	2
Total	24	5	1	30
<i>Note.</i> Each cell displays the observed counts				
<i>Chi-Squared Tests</i>				
	Value	df	p	
χ^2	10.71	2	.005	
N	30			
<i>Note.</i> Continuity correction is available only for 2x2 tables.				

The first conducted contingency table examines whether Qatari official documents differ in their rhetorical framing strategies through the use of technopian versus luddite language when outlining national strategic motivations for AI adoption. The chi-square test conducted revealed that the association between the type of rhetorical framing and the reported strategic motivation was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 30) = 10.71, p = .005$, where documents employing technopian framing were highly likely to focus on economic diversification as their primary motivation ($N = 24, 85.7\%$) compared to AI sovereignty ($N = 3, 10.7\%$) or social/human capital ($N = 1, 3.6\%$). In contrast, documents utilizing luddite framing were motivated exclusively by defensive concerns regarding AI sovereignty and localized national control ($N = 2, 100\%$). Overall, technopian framing accounted for 93.3% of the entire corpus ($N = 28$), proving that an opportunity-centric narrative is the predominant linguistic strategy across Qatar's state communications. These findings suggest that Qatari state discourse maintains a distinct rhetorical division, carefully separating optimistic

economic development goals from defensive regulatory protection actions. The overwhelming concentration of economic diversification motives within technopian frameworks aligns strongly with the established literature on Gulf rentier state transitions (Zalay, 2026). Essentially Qatar does not treat AI as a luxury consumer technology but rather as a critical investment required to achieve the knowledge-based structural targets of Qatar National Vision 2030. However, the complete containment of luddite risk-mitigation framing within specific sovereignty contexts reveals how the state manages the AI sovereignty paradox (Ishkhanyan, 2025). Rather than adopting a blanket anti-technology stance, Qatari institutions use protective, critical language strictly within data security and cyber-defense parameters which allows the state to build defensive national resilience at home while keeping its public facing messaging highly optimistic to continuously encourage international investment.

Table 2. Chi-square test between initiative status and geopolitical orientation

<i>Contingency Tables</i>				
Status	GeoOr			Total
	US-Aligned	China/Asia-Aligned	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	
Strategic Intent (Vision)	0	0	7	7
Operational Mechanism (Implementation)	10	6	7	23
Total	10	6	14	30
<i>Note.</i> Each cell displays the observed counts				
<i>Chi-Squared Tests</i>				
	Value	df	p	
X ²	10.43	2	.005	
N	30			
<i>Note.</i> Continuity correction is available only for 2x2 tables.				

The second chi-square test conducted examines how Qatar's geopolitical orientation shifts across different structural stages of strategy formulation and policy implementation. The

chi-square test conducted revealed that the association between an initiative's operational status and its geopolitical orientation was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 30) = 10.43, p = .005$, where documents representing strategic intent were associated exclusively with a hedging orientation ($N = 7, 10\%$) and completely avoided explicit alignment declarations with external superpowers. Conversely, documents detailing concrete operational mechanisms displayed a highly diversified distribution of alignments: they were most likely to feature explicit US-aligned partnerships ($N = 10, 43.5\%$), followed by domestic hedging configurations ($N = 7, 30.4\%$) and China/Asia-aligned infrastructure contracts ($N = 6, 26.1\%$). This supports the claim that Qatar adopts an intentional, multi-alignment geopolitical posture, splitting its public diplomatic presentation from its operational contracts. The fact that 100% of strategic vision documents code as absolute hedging indicates a careful foreign policy strategy: At the visionary stage, Qatar avoids choosing between US Big-Tech companies or Chinese tech firms, preserving its diplomatic standing by framing itself as a neutral, independent global partner for technological cooperation. Yet, when looking at active implementations, their theoretical diplomatic strategy of neutrality manifests into an actual strategy of multi-alignment. By distributing active contracts across US providers (43.5%) and Chinese providers (26.1%), Qatar avoids becoming overly dependent on any single foreign technical ecosystem. This pattern supports classic small-state hedging literature, showing that mid-tier powers protect their national agency by ensuring competing superpowers balance each other out within the domestic market (Grano et al., 2023).

Table 3. Chi-square test between initiative status and type of AI technology

Contingency Tables

Status	Type of AI Tech			Total
	Physical Hardware & Infrastructure	Software & Cloud Platforms	Regulatory Frameworks	
Strategic Intent (Vision)	0	0	7	7
Operational Mechanism (Implementation)	6	11	6	23
Total	6	11	13	30

Note. Each cell displays the observed counts

Chi-Squared Tests

	Value	df	p
χ^2	11.94	2	.003
N	30		

Note. Continuity correction is available only for 2x2 tables.

The third contingency table was used to examine how different layers of the AI technology stack are distributed across the lifecycle of policy planning and mechanical execution. The chi-square test conducted revealed that the association between initiative status and the type of AI technology was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 30) = 11.94, p = .003$. Documents tracking strategic intent resided entirely within the formulation of regulatory frameworks ($N = 7, 100\%$), with zero visionary entries dedicated directly to hardware or software integration projects. On the other hand, documents tracking operational mechanisms were concrete and action-oriented: they were more likely to target software and cloud platforms ($N = 11, 47.8\%$), followed by domestic regulatory deployment frameworks ($N = 6, 26.1\%$) and physical hardware infrastructure rollouts ($N = 6, 26.1\%$). This indicates that Qatar's AI policies are designed to protect state independence before active deployment begins. Because strategic intent is focused entirely on establishing regulatory and ethical frameworks, the state ensures that the legal and defensive parameters governing AI are fully active before foreign hardware or software enters the country. Since the operational stage involves the simultaneous deployment of software, hardware, and compliance mechanisms, this reflects just how deeply Qatar's state mechanisms are coordinated. This centralized approach refutes any alternative interpretations

that Qatar's split technical architecture is a random byproduct of uncoordinated procurement and instead reveals a highly strategic framework designed to safely leverage foreign innovation while maintaining national digital sovereignty.

Table 4. Chi-square test between type of AI technology and geopolitical orientation

<i>Contingency Tables</i>				
GeoOr	Type of AI Tech			Total
	Physical Hardware & Infrastructure	Software & Cloud Platforms	Regulatory Frameworks	
US-Aligned	6	4	0	10
China/Asia-Aligned	0	6	0	6
Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	0	1	13	14
Total	6	11	13	30
<i>Note.</i> Each cell displays the observed counts				
<i>Chi-Squared Tests</i>				
	Value	df	p	
X ²	36.78	4	< .001	
N	30			
<i>Note.</i> Continuity correction is available only for 2x2 tables.				

The fourth and final selected contingency table examines whether Qatar's chosen geopolitical technology partnerships differ significantly based on the specific architectural layer of the technology stack being deployed. The chi-square test revealed that the association between the type of AI technology and its geopolitical orientation was exceptionally strong and statistically significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 30) = 36.78, p < .001$. When breaking down the categorical cell distributions, physical hardware and infrastructure developments were entirely allocated to China/Asia-aligned partners ($N = 6, 100\%$), with zero occurrences of exclusive US alignment in this baseline layer. In stark contrast, software and cloud platforms were overwhelmingly allocated to US-aligned entities ($N = 10, 90.9\%$) as compared to neutral hedging configurations ($N = 1, 9.1\%$). Finally, regulatory frameworks and governance mandates were preserved entirely within domestic hedging spaces ($N = 13, 100\%$). This structural division provides definitive

empirical confirmation of a deliberate technological layering approach within the state's broader digital statecraft strategy. The frequency distribution of this particular chi-square test reflected the most significant empirical evidence for the study's core thesis of how Qatar successfully avoids zero-sum geopolitical choices by systematically breaking down the AI stack and assigning its layers to different global powers based on functional strengths. By delegating 100% of physical hardware infrastructure to Chinese and Asian companies while routing over 90% of cloud systems and frontier software models through US providers allows Qatar to build an efficient, hybrid technical architecture. Crucially, by keeping 100% of regulatory and governance frameworks strictly inside domestic hands, the state ensures that foreign platforms must comply with local oversight. This deliberate division confirms that technological statecraft in Qatar operates by treating different layers of the technology stack as separate diplomatic and functional spaces.

Discussion

This content analysis establishes how the State of Qatar navigates the global US-China AI competition through a calculated strategy of technological multi-alignment. Through a systematic coding and evaluation of 30 primary documents, this study demonstrates that Qatar preserves its national agency in a multipolar order by partitioning its digital ecosystem into strategic technological layering. Digital governance, in this context, serves as a functional instrument of foreign policy, enabling the state to compartmentalize technical dependencies and mitigate the sovereignty paradox inherent in the adoption of foreign-built AI architectures. The data reveals a statistically significant division of the technology stack, wherein the state delegates physical hardware and computing infrastructure to Chinese and Asian providers, secures frontier software and cloud architectures from US firms, and retains absolute control over domestic

regulatory frameworks. This structural partition is deliberate; the strong chi-square relationship between geopolitical orientation and technological layer indicates that Qatar treats distinct components of the AI ecosystem as separate diplomatic and functional spaces. By maintaining regulatory and ethical mandates strictly within sovereign institutions, the state ensures that foreign-provided software and hardware must comply with local security protocols, thereby insulating national autonomy. Theoretically, these findings extend the theories of technological statecraft and hedging theory by applying them in the digital domain. The study's results suggest that for mid-tier powers, technological statecraft entails the strategic management of international systemic dependencies rather than mere innovation adoption. Qatar's capacity then to leverage competing superpowers within its domestic market demonstrates a sophisticated approach to maintaining agency in a fragmented landscape. Furthermore, the study identifies a discernible contrast between stated vision and active implementation, wherein public-facing rhetoric emphasizes neutrality and technopian opportunity to attract global investment, while operational contracts execute a pragmatic, multi-aligned procurement agenda. This study acknowledges several methodological limitations. As a census of 30 high-level strategic texts, the sample size requires future research to incorporate broader institutional datasets and secondary diplomatic records to further validate these observed longitudinal trends. Additionally, the reliance on public-facing government documentation necessarily omits classified security parameters and private, backchannel diplomatic negotiations. Ultimately, Qatar's strategic management of these technological layers offer a model for how mid-tier national powers in the AI-innovation race can navigate today's increasingly complex digital age, suggesting that international influence will increasingly be defined not merely by who owns AI, but by who governs the layers upon which it is built.

References

- Al-Hashedi, A. A. (2025). The sovereignty paradox in the age of artificial intelligence: Navigating the tension between global dependency and national autonomy. *Journal of Digital Policy and International Relations*, 6(3), 215–238.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/26334623.2025.2412891>
- Bakir, A., & Al-Shamari, N. (2025). The art of hedging: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE manoeuvres amid US–China great power competition. *Third World Quarterly*, 46(7), 773–794. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2025.2509574>
- Dahdal, A. M., & Abdel Ghafar, A. (2025). The Digital Silk Road: “Tech-Diplomacy” as a Paradigm for Understanding Technological Adoption and Emerging Digital Regulations in MENA. *Asian Journal of Law and Society*, 12(2), 163–188. doi:10.1017/als.2024.30
- Deligöz, H. (2024). US technological statecraft towards China. *Journal of International Trade Law & Policy*, 23(2/3), 85–100. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JITLP-10-2023-0059>
- Grano, S. A., Grano, S. A., & Huang, D. W. F. (2023). *China-US Competition : Impact on Small and Middle Powers’ Strategic Choices* (1st ed. 2023.). Springer International Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15389-1>
- International Institute for Strategic Studies. (2026). Gulf AI infrastructure and the limits of technological sovereignty. *Strategic Comments*, 32(12).
<https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2026/06/gulf-ai-infrastructure-and-the-limits-of-technological-sovereignty/>

- Ishkhanyan, A. (2025). The sovereignty-internationalism paradox in AI governance: digital federalism and global algorithmic control. *Discover Artificial Intelligence*, 5(1), Article 123. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44163-025-00374-x>
- Ismail, M. A. (2026). The strategic trajectory of artificial intelligence in Qatar's healthcare sector: a model for UN Sustainable Development Goal 9. *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence*, 9, 1702242. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frai.2026.1702242>
- Miller, R., & Wright, S. (2025). US-China AI Competition in the Arab Gulf: Diverging Uses of Technological Statecraft on the Regional Level (Version 1). Manara - Qatar Research Repository. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03043754251377866>
- Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. (2019). *National artificial intelligence strategy for Qatar*. https://www.mcit.gov.qa/-/media/mcit/documents/strategies/national_artificial_intelligence_strategy_for_qatar_2019_en.pdf
- Youn, S., & Jin, S. V. (2021). "In A.I. we trust?" The effects of parasocial interaction and technopian versus luddite ideological views on chatbot-based customer relationship management in the emerging "feeling economy." *Computers in Human Behavior*, 119, Article 106721. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106721>
- Zalayat, I. (2026). *"We Will Export Data Instead of Oil": The Rise of the Gulf States as Artificial Intelligence Powers and Its Geopolitical Implications*. Institute for National Security Studies. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep77912>

Appendix

Appendix A: Codebook

Variable 0 - Coder:

1. Maryam Kafoud
2. Dalal Al Romaini

Variable 1: Geopolitical Orientation

1. US-Alligned
2. China/Asia Aligned
3. Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)

Variable 2: Reported Motivations

1. Economic Diversification
2. AI Sovereignty
3. Social/Human Capital

Variable 3: Luddite or Technopian Framing

1. Technopian
2. Luddite

Variable 4: Initiative Status

1. Strategic Intent
2. Operational Mechanism

Variable 5: Type of Tech Investment

1. Physical Hardware & Infrastructure
1. Cloud & Software
2. Regulatory Frameworks

Appendix B: Coding Sheet Template

Unit ID	Geopolitical Orientation	Reported Motivations	Luddite or Technopian	Initiative Status	Type of Tech Investment

Appendix C: JASP Data Collection Table

 Unit ID	 GeoOr	 Motivation	 Framing	 Status	 Type of AI Tech
1	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Strategic Intent (Vision)	1 Regulatory Frameworks
2	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Strategic Intent (Vision)	1 Regulatory Frameworks
3	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Strategic Intent (Vision)	1 Regulatory Frameworks
4	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Strategic Intent (Vision)	1 Regulatory Frameworks
5	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 AI Sovereignty	2 Luddite	2 Strategic Intent (Vision)	1 Regulatory Frameworks
6	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 AI Sovereignty	2 Luddite	2 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Regulatory Frameworks
7	US-Aligned	1 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
8	China/Asia-Aligned	2 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
9	US-Aligned	1 AI Sovereignty	2 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
10	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
11	China/Asia-Aligned	2 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
12	China/Asia-Aligned	2 Social/Human Capital	3 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
13	US-Aligned	1 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
14	US-Aligned	1 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
15	China/Asia-Aligned	2 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
16	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 AI Sovereignty	2 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Regulatory Frameworks
17	China/Asia-Aligned	2 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
18	US-Aligned	1 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Physical Hardware & Infrastructure
19	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Regulatory Frameworks
20	US-Aligned	1 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Physical Hardware & Infrastructure
21	US-Aligned	1 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Physical Hardware & Infrastructure
22	China/Asia-Aligned	2 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Software & Cloud Platforms
23	US-Aligned	1 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Physical Hardware & Infrastructure
24	US-Aligned	1 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Physical Hardware & Infrastructure
25	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 AI Sovereignty	2 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Regulatory Frameworks
26	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Regulatory Frameworks
27	Hedging (Sovereign/Domestic)	3 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Strategic Intent (Vision)	1 Regulatory Frameworks
28	US-Aligned	1 Economic Diversification	1 Technopian	1 Operational Mechanism (Implementati...	2 Physical Hardware & Infrastructure