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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

AI Governance and a Voice for the Global South

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 **The Hindu**

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THE LIFT LINE

The real fault line in artificial intelligence is not between machines and humans but between the handful of economies that own the compute and the many that supply the data. India's task is to make sure the Global South is a shaper of AI rules, not raw material for someone else's model.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

AI governance blends technology policy, international relations and India's development strategy, making it a cross-cutting theme. The India AI Impact Summit hosted in New Delhi in February 2026 and India's push for a "third way" give it strong current relevance.

GS Paper 2: India and its neighbourhood; groupings and agreements involving India; **bilateral** (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/bilateral/>), regional and global groupings; effect of policies of developed countries on India's interests; the Global South.

GS Paper 3: Awareness in the field of IT; developments and applications of technology; **indigenisation** (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/indigenisation/>) of technology.

Prelims angle: India AI Impact Summit 2026 (<https://ujyari.com/terms/india-ai-impact-summit/>); IndiaAI Mission; Digital Public Infrastructure (Aadhaar, UPI); the EU AI Act; NITI Aayog's approach to responsible AI.

Mains angle: How India can govern AI around public purpose and **strategic autonomy** (<https://ujyari.com/terms/strategic-autonomy/>) while championing the developmental interests of the Global South.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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Global AI capacity is strikingly concentrated. The most advanced foundation models, the bulk of specialised chips and the largest data centres sit within a small number of firms and states, chiefly in the United States, with China as the principal challenger. Developing nations contribute vast volumes of data, cheap digital labour and consumer markets, but capture little of the value and have little say in how the technology is governed. The risk is a new dependency: the Global South as data and resource supplier to an AI economy owned elsewhere.

India occupies an unusual position. It is not a compute superpower, yet it has demonstrated, through the India Stack, Aadhaar and UPI, that it can build population-scale Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) that is open, inexpensive and interoperable. In February 2026, India hosted the India AI Impact Summit, drawing delegations from over 100 countries, explicitly to place the Global South's needs at the centre of the AI conversation. This is the setting for India's proposed "third way": neither the compliance-heavy, rights-first model of the European Union's AI Act nor the light-touch, industry-led model of the United States, but a path anchored in public purpose, user safety, DPI and strategic autonomy.

THE CORE ARGUMENT / ISSUE

The central argument is that India should promote AI development around public purpose and user safety, and use its convening power to give the Global South a genuine voice, rather than settling into the role of an AI investment destination and data supplier.

The Dependency Trap

Without indigenous compute, models and standards, developing economies risk locking themselves into terms set by a few providers, paying rent for foundational capabilities and exporting the data that trains the very systems they must then license back.

India as a Middle Power

India can act as a bridge between the developed AI core and the Global South, translating population-scale, low-cost, public-interest technology into a shared template. Its credibility rests on DPI having already delivered financial inclusion and welfare delivery at scale.

Governance for Public Purpose

The distinctive Indian contribution is to frame AI governance not primarily as a market-access or safety-compliance question but as a development and public-good question: does the system expand access, protect the vulnerable user and serve national priorities.

MODEL	PRIORITY	INSTRUMENT	LIMITATION FOR THE GLOBAL SOUTH
European Union	Rights and safety	Mandatory, risk-tiered regulation	Compliance cost may exclude smaller states
United States	Innovation	Light-touch, industry self-governance	Concentrates power in a few firms
India's "third way"	Public purpose, autonomy	DPI, open standards, user safety	Depends on closing the compute and chip gap

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (ANALYTICAL FRAME)

Separate three layers of the AI stack: the physical layer (chips, compute, data centres), the model layer (foundation models) and the application layer (services built on top). India is strong at the application and DPI layer, weak at the physical and model layers. Governance leverage (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/leverage/>) flows from wherever you sit in the stack. The strategic question is whether India can convert application-layer and DPI strength into rule-making influence while steadily reducing dependence in the lower layers. For the Global South more broadly, the frame is value capture: who owns the layer that captures most of the economic surplus, and how the rules of governance distribute that surplus.

THE DIAGRAM IN WORDS

AI capacity concentrates in a few economies (US, then China) -> developing nations supply data, labour and markets but capture little value -> risk of a new dependency, the Global South as data supplier -> India offers a "third way": DPI, public purpose, user safety, strategic autonomy -> India AI Impact Summit convenes 100-plus nations -> India as middle power bridging the AI core and the Global South -> governance that expands access rather than entrenching dependence.

WAY FORWARD

- 1 **Close the capability gap.** Scale the [IndiaAI Mission](https://ujjiyari.com/schemes/indiaai-mission/)’s compute, indigenous chip efforts and domestic foundation models to reduce dependence on foreign providers over time.
- 2 **Export the DPI template.** Offer open, interoperable, public-interest AI building blocks to Global South partners as a shared alternative to proprietary stacks.
- 3 **Champion inclusive global rules.** Push, through the G20, the Global South platform and UN processes, for AI governance norms that reflect developmental realities, data [sovereignty](https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/sovereignty/) and equitable value-sharing.

- 4 **Anchor governance in public purpose.** Legislate for user safety, transparency and accountability in high-impact AI uses while keeping innovation space open, avoiding both regulatory capture and a race to the bottom.

PYQ LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

UPSC has asked about the ethical and governance challenges of emerging technologies (2020: “What are the main socio-economic implications arising out of the development of IT industries...”) and India’s role in global groupings. This editorial links AI governance to India’s strategic autonomy and Global South leadership.

Practice question: “In the emerging global order of artificial intelligence, India must be a rule-shaper for the Global South, not a data supplier to the compute-rich few.” Examine India’s strategy for AI governance rooted in public purpose and strategic autonomy. (15 marks, 250 words)

Sources: The Hindu (<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion>)

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