

Digital Commons: Governance Framework for Artificial Intelligence

March 2026

Globalist International Research Division

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Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence systems are increasingly critical to economic productivity, national security, and social welfare. Yet their development remains concentrated among a small number of corporations with minimal democratic oversight.

This paper examines proposals for governing AI as a "digital commons"—shared infrastructure subject to collective oversight:

- Near-term possibilities** (Years 1-5): Transparency standards, safety testing requirements
- Medium-term coordination** (Years 5-15): Regional frameworks, interoperability standards
- Long-term aspirations** (Years 15+): Global governance institutions with binding authority

Core Finding: Technical standards for AI safety are feasible and partially implemented. Global AI governance faces severe obstacles: US-China strategic competition, corporate resistance, and absence of precedents for governing rapidly evolving technology.

1. The Concentration Crisis

1.1 Market Structure

Category	Dominant Entities	Market Share
Foundation Models	OpenAI, Google, Anthropic, Meta	~90% of frontier research
Cloud Compute	AWS, Azure, Google Cloud	Oligopoly
AI Chips	NVIDIA	~80% market share

1.2 Governance Gaps

- No binding international standards
- No independent monitoring of frontier models
- No systematic incident reporting
- No liability framework for AI harms

2. The Political Economy of AI Governance

2.1 Structural Barriers

Barrier 1: US-China Strategic Competition

- Export controls on AI chips demonstrate willingness to fragment global ecosystem
- Neither superpower will accept binding constraints limiting competitive advantage

Barrier 2: Corporate Resistance

- Voluntary commitments preferred over binding regulation
- Regulatory capture through technical complexity arguments

Barrier 3: Institutional Innovation Challenges

- Rapid technological change outpaces institutional design
- No precedent for global technology governance

3. Governance Frameworks: Three Scenarios

3.1 Scenario A: Transparency Standards (Years 1-5)

- Registration requirements for models above capability thresholds
- Third-party safety evaluations
- Incident reporting for serious harms

3.2 Scenario B: Regional Coordination (Years 5-15)

- EU-US AI Agreement on mutual certification
- Democratic AI Alliance coordination
- Compatible liability frameworks

3.3 Scenario C: Global AI Governance (Years 15+)

Requirements:

- US-China strategic détente
- Industry acceptance of binding constraints
- Crisis creating political will

Conclusion

AI governance is technically feasible but politically blocked. The gap between what is needed (global coordination on catastrophic risks) and what is possible (regional regulation) reflects power structures and geopolitical competition.

The Bottom Line: Pursue incremental gains in transparency and safety; prepare for fragmentation; maintain institutional designs for future implementation.

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