

The Global Architecture of Artificial Intelligence Governance: A Comprehensive Analysis of Jurisdictional Frameworks (2025-2026)

The proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative models and agentic systems, has precipitated a fundamental paradigm shift in global regulatory frameworks. Transitioning from a period of unbridled algorithmic experimentation characterized by voluntary ethical guidelines, the international community has entered an era of intricate, legally binding, and sovereign governance. As of 2026, nations worldwide have recognized that unchecked AI development poses systemic risks to human rights, economic stability, data privacy, and geopolitical security.¹ Consequently, governments are deploying a polycentric approach to AI regulation, yielding a complex matrix of international treaties, horizontal statutory regimes, and agile, sector-specific frameworks.

This comprehensive research report provides an exhaustive, region-by-region analysis of the AI ethics acts, laws, rules, and regulations currently in effect or under advanced legislative consideration across the globe. By mapping this regulatory landscape, the analysis reveals the fundamental causal relationships between geopolitical posturing, technological innovation, and legal accountability, explicitly detailing the implications and enforcement scenarios for every major jurisdiction, with a specialized focus on the rapidly developing frameworks in India and its neighboring South Asian countries.

Supranational and International Frameworks

Before examining sovereign jurisdictions, it is imperative to dissect the supranational architectures that serve as the foundational scaffolding for domestic policies. These international frameworks exert immense normative power, harmonizing disparate national strategies into cohesive global standards and establishing the definitional baselines used by domestic legislatures.

The Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence

Adopted on May 17, 2024, the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law represents a historic milestone as the first international, legally binding treaty governing AI.² Unlike market-centric regulations designed to control product safety, this Convention functions explicitly as a universal human rights instrument. It was drafted by the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI) with contributions from 46 member states, the European Union, and 11 non-member states,

including the United States, Canada, and Australia, positioning it as a potentially global treaty.² The Convention mandates that the entire lifecycle of an AI system complies with fundamental human rights principles, including human dignity, individual autonomy, equality, non-discrimination, transparency, accountability, and safe innovation.⁴ To ensure the treaty withstands the test of time, its drafters constructed it to be technology-neutral, focusing on the outcomes and impacts of algorithmic systems rather than the specific neural network architectures driving them.⁴ The treaty applies to both public and private sector actors, though it notably exempts national defense matters and certain research and development activities, provided such testing does not interfere with democratic institutions or the rule of law.⁴ Enforcement and long-term effectiveness are overseen by a formal follow-up mechanism known as the Conference of the Parties.⁴ This body, composed of official representatives of the signatory states, is empowered to monitor compliance, evaluate the extent of implementation, and facilitate public hearings with relevant stakeholders.⁴ For early signatories like Canada, the Convention serves to strengthen global cooperation, ensuring that AI development remains rights-respecting and inclusive, particularly as nations navigate the societal risks associated with algorithmic deployment.⁵

The OECD AI Principles and 2024 Revisions

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) AI Principles, initially adopted in 2019, serve as the premier intergovernmental standard on AI, promoting innovative and trustworthy systems.⁶ The framework is profoundly influential, having been adopted by the G20 and acting as the epistemological basis for national policies, including the European Union's AI Act and the United States' NIST AI Risk Management Framework.⁷

Recognizing the rapid evolution of technology, the OECD substantially updated these principles in 2024 to address the advent of advanced generative AI and autonomous agentic systems.⁶ The updated values-based principles emphasize five core tenets: inclusive growth and sustainable development; respect for human rights and democratic values; transparency and explainability; robustness, security, and safety; and stringent accountability.⁶ The 2024 revisions specifically target the growing threat of systemic misinformation and disinformation, establishing safeguards to ensure information integrity in the context of generative AI.⁶

Furthermore, the updates mandate that AI actors implement mechanisms allowing human operators to override, repair, or decommission malfunctioning AI systems safely, thereby mitigating risks from intentional or unintentional misuse.⁶

The OECD framework also directs member governments to foster interoperable governance through practical recommendations. Policymakers are urged to invest in multidisciplinary research, foster an inclusive AI-enabling ecosystem through data sharing mechanisms, and build human capacity to prepare for labor market transformations.⁶ To support these goals, the OECD maintains the AI Policy Observatory and the AI Incidents Monitor (AIM), live databases tracking public policies and algorithmic hazards across more than 70 countries.⁶

UNESCO Recommendations on the Ethics of AI

Applicable to all 194 member states since its adoption in 2021, the UNESCO "Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence" outlines a fundamentally human-rights-centered approach to algorithmic governance.¹¹ The framework is anchored by four core values: human rights and dignity; living in peaceful and interconnected societies; ensuring diversity and inclusiveness; and environmental ecosystem flourishing.¹¹ The UNESCO guidelines are particularly vital for developing economies where resources for establishing independent technical standards may be scarce. It dictates ten core principles, notably the "Proportionality and Do No Harm" doctrine, which dictates that the use of AI systems must never exceed what is strictly necessary to achieve a legitimate aim.¹¹ Additional principles include safety and security, the right to privacy, multi-stakeholder adaptive governance, and comprehensive awareness and digital literacy programs.¹¹

Supranational Body	Key Framework	Core Focus	Enforcement / Monitoring Mechanism
Council of Europe	Framework Convention on AI (2024)	Human Rights, Democracy, Rule of Law	Legally binding; Conference of the Parties oversight
OECD	AI Principles (Updated 2024)	Trustworthy AI, Economic Growth, Interoperability	AI Policy Observatory, AI Incidents Monitor (AIM)
UNESCO	Recommendations on the Ethics of AI (2021)	Do No Harm, Proportionality, Diversity	Normative global standard for 194 member states

Europe: Regulatory Hegemony and Horizontal Statutes

The European continent, led by the European Union, remains the vanguard of aggressive, horizontal AI regulation. By leveraging its massive market size, Europe dictates global compliance through extraterritorial legal frameworks, forcing multinational entities to conform to its standards or risk exclusion from one of the world's most lucrative economic zones.

The European Union: The AI Act

The European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act) is widely recognized as the most comprehensive, rigorous, and consequential horizontal AI statute globally. Having officially entered into force on August 1, 2024, the Act utilizes a risk-based classification architecture that fundamentally alters the economic calculus for AI developers operating within, or exporting outputs to, the European Economic Area (EEA).¹³ This expansive jurisdictional reach creates the "Brussels effect," compelling global businesses to adopt EU standards across their entire operational footprint to avoid supply chain friction and regulatory fragmentation.¹⁵ The Act's implementation is strategically staggered to allow markets to adjust:

1. **Unacceptable Risk (Prohibited Practices):** As of February 2, 2025, the EU strictly banned eight specific AI practices that pose severe, unacceptable risks to fundamental rights, democracy, and public safety.¹³ This prohibition encompasses biometric categorization systems based on sensitive traits, social scoring algorithms, subliminal manipulation techniques designed to distort human behavior, and the untargeted scraping of facial images from the internet or CCTV footage to build facial recognition databases.¹⁴
2. **General-Purpose AI (GPAI):** Governance rules for General-Purpose AI models, particularly those carrying systemic risks, become fully applicable on August 2, 2025.¹⁴ Providers of these foundational models are subjected to rigorous transparency obligations, must maintain extensive technical documentation, and are required to comply with stringent EU copyright laws during the model training phase.¹⁴
3. **High-Risk Systems:** By August 2, 2026, deployers of high-risk systems—defined as those utilized in critical infrastructure, employment, education, law enforcement, and border control—must adhere to strict pre-market obligations.¹⁴ Embedded systems within regulated products have an extended transition period until August 2, 2027.¹⁴ Crucially, the Act obligates deployers to conduct a comprehensive fundamental rights impact assessment prior to integrating a high-risk AI system into their operations.¹⁴

The implications of the EU AI Act are profound. Developers face mandatory conformity assessments, shifting the regulatory burden heavily to the pre-deployment phase.

Non-compliance invites severe administrative fines, effectively enforcing a global high-water mark for algorithmic accountability.¹⁵

The United Kingdom: The AI Regulation Bill (2025)

In stark contrast to the European Union's centralized, prescriptive approach, the United Kingdom has historically championed a "pro-innovation," decentralized strategy, relying on the agility of existing sectoral regulators.¹⁷ However, acknowledging the necessity to close specific legal loopholes, the UK government introduced the Artificial Intelligence Regulation Bill during the 2024-2025 parliamentary session.¹³

The Bill eschews the creation of a massive central AI bureaucracy. Instead, it enshrines five core regulatory principles derived from a previous white paper: safety, transparency, fairness, accountability, and contestability.¹⁸ The legislation highlights the critical need for public engagement regarding AI risks and mandates strict transparency in third-party data usage, explicitly requiring developers to obtain informed consent when utilizing datasets for AI training.¹⁸

Enforcement remains decentralized, empowering specific agencies to tackle domain-relevant algorithmic harms. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), in collaboration with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), is actively developing a statutory Code of Practice for firms deploying AI and automated decision-making systems within financial markets, aiming to reduce regulatory uncertainty without stifling fintech innovation.¹⁹ The Office of Communications (Ofcom) regulates AI through its focus on online safety, specifically targeting

synthetic media, personalization algorithms, and broadcasting resilience.²⁰ Meanwhile, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) monitors the foundational model ecosystem to prevent algorithmic collusion, anti-competitive monopolies, and violations of consumer protection laws.¹⁹ While this sector-led approach allows for highly nuanced interventions, legal analysts note it risks fostering regulatory arbitrage if agencies apply conflicting standards.¹⁹

The Russian Federation: A State-Driven Hybrid Strategy

The Russian Federation manages artificial intelligence through a highly centralized, state-driven approach designed to ensure technological sovereignty and national security. The foundational legal text is the 2030 National AI Development Strategy, originally approved by Presidential Decree No. 490 in October 2019.²² Recognizing rapid technological shifts, this framework was substantially expanded by Presidential Decree No. 124 on February 15, 2024.²²

The Russian framework is uniquely hybrid, intertwining statutory regulation, ethical codes, and heavy corporate subsidies.²² Decree No. 124 dramatically increased the number of identified regulatory areas from 9 to 28, building a comprehensive matrix for statutory control.²² To accelerate domestic adoption in the face of international sanctions, the Russian government utilizes a powerful economic enforcement mechanism: the receipt of state subsidies for enterprises in economic and social sectors is strictly conditional upon the demonstrated implementation of AI technologies.²²

Furthermore, to protect corporate developers, the strategy explicitly mandates the removal of legal barriers for large language models (LLMs). This involves legally defining the "boundaries of responsibility" (liability limits) for generative AI developers, shielding them from certain post-deployment damages to foster aggressive innovation.²² The strategy also heavily prioritizes access to domestic data, mandating the formulation of strict data anonymization rules to allow developers to safely utilize vast repositories of personal and health data.²²

On the ethical front, Russia relies on the National AI Code of Ethics developed by the AI Alliance.²² Although non-binding, market participants are strongly encouraged to join, with a dedicated commission assessing the societal impacts of models and overseeing the ethical deployment of recommendation algorithms.²³ At the infrastructure level, government directives mandate the creation of an electronic component base, the development of domestic fundamental generative models for use in critical information infrastructure, and collaboration with entities like Rosatom to secure data center accessibility.²⁵

North America: Federal Gridlock and Subnational Proliferation

The North American regulatory landscape exhibits a striking bifurcation. While Canada pursues an aggressive, highly punitive centralized statute, the United States is characterized by federal gridlock, resulting in a complex, fragmented patchwork of state-level legislation.

Canada: The Artificial Intelligence and Data Act (AIDA)

Canada's primary attempt at comprehensive federal AI regulation is the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act (AIDA), bundled within the broader Bill C-27, which also seeks to modernize the country's privacy and data protection tribunals.¹³ AIDA is designed to govern high-impact AI systems involved in international and interprovincial trade, imposing rigorous accountability mechanisms across the entire algorithmic lifecycle.²⁷

The legislation imposes heavy obligations on providers, deployers, importers, and distributors, mandating strict compliance regarding data governance, record-keeping, human oversight, cybersecurity, and quality control.²⁹ However, the legislative process has been fraught with political delays. The pace of the Bill's review by the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology was sluggish, and the bill temporarily died on the order paper in January 2026 due to the prorogation of Parliament, leaving the exact timeline for enactment uncertain.²⁸

Despite these delays, the proposed enforcement mechanisms within AIDA are draconian. The Minister of Innovation is granted extraordinary unilateral authority to demand records, order audits, and completely halt the deployment of any high-impact system that poses an imminent risk of harm.³¹ The penalty structure is among the most severe globally: individuals or non-individual entities that knowingly or recklessly make available an AI system likely to cause serious physical or psychological harm, or substantial economic damage through fraud, face fines up to \$25,000,000 CAD or 5% of their gross global revenue, alongside potential imprisonment of up to five years for responsible individuals.³¹

The United States: The Decentralized Legislative Patchwork

In sharp contrast to the European Union and Canada, the United States is pursuing a highly decentralized regulatory framework.³² At the federal level, action has been largely limited to executive directives and sector-specific spending. The CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 designates AI as a critical technology area, while the White House has issued Executive Orders outlining principles for responsible development, transparency, and worker protection.³² In March 2026, the White House published a "National AI Legislative Framework," recommending that Congress develop a unified federal statute that would explicitly preempt burdensome state laws while preserving states' traditional police powers (such as child protection and fraud prevention).³³ However, until Congress passes preemptive legislation, the regulatory vacuum has been filled aggressively by state legislatures.³³

This state-level proliferation requires domestic and multinational enterprises to navigate a complex, multi-jurisdictional compliance matrix:

1. **Colorado (SB 205):** In May 2024, Colorado enacted the Colorado Artificial Intelligence Act, becoming the first US state to pass comprehensive, horizontal AI legislation.¹³ Scheduled to take full effect on June 30, 2026, the law mandates that developers and deployers of high-risk AI systems exercise a strict duty of reasonable care to prevent algorithmic discrimination.³⁵ It requires clear consumer disclosures whenever individuals interact with an AI system, setting a precedent that other states are actively modeling.³⁵
2. **California:** Operating as the de facto regulatory pioneer due to its massive tech sector, California has implemented a suite of highly specific laws. The AI Transparency Act (SB

942), effective January 1, 2026, targets synthetic content by requiring stringent provenance tracking and watermarking.¹³ AB 2930 regulates automated decision tools, while the California Consumer Privacy Act (AB 1008) has been updated to cover Automated Decision-Making Technology (ADMT).¹³ Furthermore, the California Civil Rights Department strictly governs the use of automated systems in employment and housing to prevent civil rights violations.¹³

- 3. **Utah (SB 149):** The Artificial Intelligence Policy Act, which became law in May 2024, focuses heavily on consumer protection.¹³ It establishes a regulatory AI analysis program and creates strict liability for enterprises that use AI to violate consumer protection laws, particularly if they fail to disclose that a consumer is interacting with a non-human bot.³⁴
- 4. **Targeted Domain Legislation:** Numerous other states and municipalities have enacted highly targeted laws. New York City’s Local Law 144 mandates rigorous, independent bias audits for Automated Employment Decision Tools (AEDTs).¹³ Illinois enforces the Artificial Intelligence Video Interview Act (AIVIA) alongside HB 3773 to protect job applicants’ privacy and biometric data.¹³ Texas (Responsible AI Governance Act), Maryland (HB 1202 on facial recognition), Connecticut (SB 1103), and Maine (H.P. 1154 on Chatbot Transparency) have all implemented targeted statutes addressing distinct elements of algorithmic risk.¹³

This decentralized environment forces corporations to adopt the most stringent state standard (typically California or Colorado) across their entire US operations, increasing compliance overhead and the demand for third-party algorithmic auditing.³²

US State / Municipality	Legislation	Effective Date / Status	Core Regulatory Mandate
Colorado	SB 205 (AI Act)	June 30, 2026	Duty of reasonable care against algorithmic discrimination in high-risk systems.
California	SB 942 (Transparency)	Jan. 1, 2026	Strict watermarking and synthetic content provenance tracking.
Utah	SB 149 (Policy Act)	May 1, 2024	Strict liability for consumer fraud via undisclosed AI bot interactions.
New York City	Local Law 144	July 2023	Mandatory independent bias audits for Automated Employment Decision Tools.

Latin America: Human Rights and Pre-Market Authorization

Latin America is rapidly transitioning from observational policy formulation to the active drafting of robust statutory frameworks. The region is heavily influenced by the extraterritorial norms of the EU AI Act but explicitly tailors its legislation to address systemic regional challenges, specifically deep-seated social inequality and the historical protection of fundamental human rights.³⁶

Mexico: Federal Law Regulating Artificial Intelligence

Mexico's proposed Federal Law Regulating Artificial Intelligence positions the nation as a regulatory leader in Latin America.¹³ The legislation establishes a powerful, decentralized oversight body—the National Commission for Artificial Intelligence (CONAIA), operating under the Ministry of Economy.³⁸ CONAIA's sweeping mandate encompasses four pillars: national oversight and auditing of AI systems; pre-market authorization of high-risk models; issuing sector-specific technical standards; and coordinating with existing data protection, competition, and telecommunications regulators.³⁸

The Mexican framework mirrors the EU's tiered risk architecture. It explicitly prohibits AI systems that engage in social scoring, subliminal manipulation, or real-time biometric surveillance in public spaces (barring strict security exemptions).³⁸ High-risk systems—such as those deployed in healthcare diagnostics, law enforcement, education, and credit scoring—cannot enter the Mexican market without prior authorization from CONAIA.³⁸ To obtain this approval, developers must submit comprehensive risk assessments, granular technical documentation detailing data sources and training methodologies, empirical testing results, and a robust human oversight plan.³⁸ Furthermore, generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs) face enhanced scrutiny, including mandatory labeling of synthetic text and imagery, content moderation to filter harmful outputs, and continuous fairness audits to correct discriminatory patterns.³⁸ Violations invite severe enforcement, including administrative fines ranging from 500 to 10,000 UMA (approximately €3,500 to €70,000), temporary operational suspensions, public registry listing for sanctioned entities ("naming and shaming"), and potential criminal liability for offenses jeopardizing public safety.³⁸

Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Regional Neighbors

- **Brazil:** The Brazilian Senate is actively advancing Bill No. 2338/2023 (The Brazil AI Act). This framework places an overwhelming emphasis on the protection of fundamental human rights and democratic values.¹³ It introduces strict civil liability for damages caused by high-risk AI systems, ensuring that victims of algorithmic discrimination or malfunction have direct avenues for legal redress.³⁶
- **Chile:** Chile's 2024 AI Bill similarly adopts a risk-based oversight mechanism. It categorizes systems by their potential for societal harm and mandates that deployments

strictly adhere to national ethical guidelines, operating in tandem with existing privacy laws.³⁸

- **Argentina:** Argentina maintains strong momentum in digital regulation. While currently operating under non-binding AI governance guidelines via its 2025 AI Strategy, the government is drafting a highly anticipated Bill on Personal Data Protection in AI Systems.¹⁶ This legislation specifically seeks to modernize the nation's aging Personal Data Protection Law (enacted in 2000), expanding its scope to regulate the vast quantities of personal data ingested during the training and deployment of machine learning models.¹⁶
- **Peru and Colombia:** Peru became the first nation in the region to officially enact an overarching AI law, currently preparing secondary regulations for implementation.³⁷ Colombia maintains a highly active legislative environment, with multiple competing AI bills currently under review by its congress, reflecting a vibrant debate on the balance between tech innovation and civil liberties.³⁷

Asia-Pacific (Excluding South Asia): Innovation Ecosystems and Agile Governance

The broader Asia-Pacific (APAC) region generally favors an agile, pro-innovation regulatory posture. Eager to capture portions of the multi-trillion-dollar global digital economy, governments here largely eschew heavy ex-ante statutory restrictions. Instead, they rely on soft law, industry self-regulation, technical testing toolkits, and post-market enforcement to guide AI development.

Japan: The AI Promotion Act (2025)

Japan's regulatory philosophy is explicitly designed to foster economic revitalization. The "Act on the Promotion of Research and Development and Utilization of AI-Related Technologies" (the AI Promotion Act) passed the legislature and came into full effect in September 2025.⁴⁰ The legislation outright rejects the EU's strict compliance models, declaring up front that AI technologies are fundamental to the development of Japan's economy and society.⁴¹ The Act adopts a "whole-of-society" approach, characterized by a soft, high-level regulatory touch.⁴² It assigns responsibilities to five groups of stakeholders, mandating the national government to utilize AI to improve administrative efficiency while providing financial measures to promote AI research.⁴³ For private entities, the law imposes a general duty on "AI Business Actors" (developers, providers, and business users) to make reasonable efforts to align with the government's Fundamental Plan for AI.⁴⁴

Uniquely, the Japanese Act does not impose direct, statutory financial penalties for non-compliance.⁴² Instead, it empowers the government to utilize a "name and shame" enforcement mechanism. Authorities hold the power to publicly disclose the identities of enterprises that utilize AI in a manner that violates human rights, safety standards, or ethical guidelines.¹⁶ In Japan's corporate culture, this threat of severe reputational damage acts as a

highly potent deterrent without the need for rigid bureaucratic auditing.⁴²

China: Sectoral Specificity and State Alignment

China maintains one of the most granular, heavily enforced AI regulatory regimes globally. Rather than a single omnibus law, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) issues targeted regulations governing specific algorithmic vectors to ensure outputs align flawlessly with state socio-political norms.³⁵

Under the "Generative AI Measures and Labeling Rules" and the updated "Measures for Identifying Synthetic Content" (effective September 2025), China enforces rigorous transparency.¹³ Service providers are legally required to add both explicit and implicit labels (such as invisible digital watermarks) to all AI-generated media to combat deepfakes and misinformation.¹³ Furthermore, through rules managing AI algorithms and deep synthesis technologies, alongside the stringent Personal Information Protection Law, China places immense legal liability directly on service providers.¹³ These providers are mandated to aggressively filter training datasets and moderate algorithmic outputs to ensure the removal of any content deemed harmful or inaccurate by state authorities.³⁵

Singapore: Model Governance and AI Verify

Singapore has successfully positioned itself as the premier global testing ground for trustworthy AI governance. The Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) drives this initiative through iterative, highly practical frameworks. Following the 2024 Model AI Governance Framework for Generative AI, IMDA introduced the Model AI Governance Framework for Agentic AI in January 2026.⁴⁵

The Agentic AI framework tackles the complex risks associated with autonomous and semi-autonomous AI agents capable of independent task execution and decision-making.⁴⁶ It provides organizations with technical controls across four dimensions: bounding risks upfront during use-case selection; ensuring humans remain meaningfully accountable by establishing strict approval checkpoints; implementing continuous process controls; and defining end-user responsibilities.⁴⁷

Singapore operationalizes these non-binding frameworks through "AI Verify," a pioneering government-backed software toolkit and testing framework.⁴⁵ AI Verify combines technical tests—evaluating common supervised-learning classification and regression models across tabular and image datasets—with extensive process checks.⁴⁸ IMDA has actively mapped this toolkit to international standards, including the NIST AI Risk Management Framework, enabling multinational corporations to utilize AI Verify as a mechanism to reduce global compliance friction.⁴⁶ Alongside guidelines from the Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC), Singapore offers an unparalleled environment for responsible commercialization.⁴⁵

South Korea and Australia

South Korea continues to bolster its global tech standing, finalizing its AI Basic Act in January 2026.¹³ Aligned with the regional pro-innovation ethos, the Act strengthens baseline

transparency and safety requirements while heavily emphasizing state promotional measures, including robust financial support for R&D, commercial AI adoption, and national workforce preparation.¹³

Australia released its comprehensive National AI Plan on December 2, 2025.⁴⁹ The plan represents a deliberate strategic pivot away from the EU's risk-based horizontal models.⁴⁹ Instead, Australia aims to regulate AI firmly within the bounds of existing consumer, privacy, and competition laws.⁴⁹ To coordinate this effort, the government established the National AI Safety Institute, a new regulatory body designed to support the implementation of the plan, test advanced models, and liaise with international safety networks.⁴⁹

ASEAN: The Regional Guide on AI Governance

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) addresses the AI transition for its ten member states through the ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics, published in 2024 and subsequently updated to cover Generative AI.⁵⁰ Aimed at a region hosting over half of global AI users and projected to see a \$1 trillion GDP boost from the technology, the guide is vital for preventing regulatory fragmentation that could stifle the digital economy.¹

The non-binding framework outlines seven core principles: transparency and explainability, fairness and equity, security and safety, robustness and reliability, human-centricity, privacy and data governance, and accountability.⁵² It provides organizations with practical methodologies for structuring internal governance, managing operations, and, critically, determining the appropriate level of human involvement required in AI-augmented decision-making, specifically excluding military or dual-use applications from its commercial focus.⁵²

South Asia: Digital Leapfrogging, DPI, and Capacity Building

South Asia represents a highly critical nexus in global AI governance. The nations in this region are tasked with balancing the urgent necessity for digital leapfrogging and economic acceleration against the profound systemic vulnerabilities of their massive, diverse populations. An unmanaged AI transition in this region risks severely widening development gaps.¹

India: The 2025 AI Governance Guidelines

India has firmly established itself as a normative policy leader in the Global South. Recognizing that AI is both a powerful engine to achieve its "Viksit Bharat 2047" national development aspirations and a vector for severe societal risks—evidenced by incidents of deepfake-driven blackmail, medical misdiagnoses by chatbots, and algorithmic election interference—the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) released the comprehensive AI Governance Guidelines in December 2025.⁴⁹

India's strategy explicitly rejects the adoption of a new, restrictive horizontal statutory law.⁵⁷ Embracing the motto "Safe and trusted AI for all" and the principle of **"Innovation Over**

Restraint," the government utilizes existing legislation, such as the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act and the Information Technology Act, supported by rules from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).⁴⁹

The 2025 Guidelines are structurally robust, divided into a four-part framework built upon **Six Pillars of Governance** and **Seven "Sutras"** (Guiding Principles).⁴⁹

- **The Seven Sutras:** These technology-agnostic principles dictate that Trust is the Foundation; mandate a "People First" human-centric design; prioritize Innovation Over Restraint; ensure Fairness and Equity to prevent caste or linguistic bias; maintain Accountability; require systems to be Understandable by Design; and demand Safety, Resilience, and environmental Sustainability.⁴⁹
- **The Six Pillars:** The operational recommendations focus on Infrastructure expansion (boosting national GPU capacity); Capacity Building (skilling programs); agile Policy and Regulation; context-specific Risk Mitigation; Graded Accountability based on risk and due diligence across the value chain; and the development of specialized Institutions.⁴⁹

The practical application of India's framework is globally unique due to its profound integration with the nation's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).⁴⁹ The government leverages "digital rails"—such as Aadhaar for identity verification and UPI for payments—to safely deploy AI services in crucial public sectors like healthcare, agriculture, and welfare, targeting low-income and rural populations.⁴⁹ Furthermore, AI training data is heavily regulated through the Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture (DEPA), utilizing privacy-enhancing technologies to allow citizen-consented data sharing.⁴⁹

To combat specific harms without broad bans, India relies heavily on "compliance-by-design" and techno-legal tools. The guidelines strongly recommend the adoption of C2PA-style global standards for content authentication, utilizing cryptographic watermarking and forensic attribution to neutralize the threat of malicious deepfakes targeting women and children.⁴⁹ Institutional enforcement is managed by the newly formed AI Governance Group (AIGG) for cross-ministry coordination, a Technology Policy Expert Committee, and the India AI Safety Institute, tasked with technical validation and model testing.⁴⁹ By prioritizing voluntary commitments, self-certifications, transparency reports, and offering incentives like regulatory sandbox access and reputational badges, India seeks to nurture its vast tech ecosystem while enforcing accountability.⁴⁹

Pakistan: The National AI Policy 2025

Approved by the Federal Cabinet in July 2025, Pakistan's Artificial Intelligence Policy 2025 is positioned as a cornerstone of the nation's Digital Nation Vision, designed to propel the country toward a knowledge-based economy.⁵⁸ The policy is architected around strategic pillars that focus aggressively on rectifying foundational deficits in infrastructure and human capital.⁵⁸ To stimulate the domestic ecosystem, the policy establishes the National AI Fund (NAIF), providing ring-fenced venture capital funding for R&D, startups, and commercialization.⁵⁸ Recognizing a severe talent deficit, Pakistan has set a highly ambitious target to train one million AI professionals and 10,000 master trainers by 2030.⁵⁸ This human capital pipeline will

be facilitated through a geographically distributed network of Centers of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (CoE-AI) across seven major cities.⁵⁸

Governance under the Pakistani framework relies on a newly established AI Council and an AI Regulatory Directorate, which oversees sectoral regulatory sandboxes to allow for safe, bounded innovation.⁵⁸ The strategy mandates the creation of a national compute grid, centralized datasets, and cloud resources.⁵⁹ Sectoral roadmaps are being drawn to integrate AI into agriculture, climate resilience, and energy.⁶⁰ However, independent analysts emphasize that the realization of these ambitious goals faces structural delivery risks, particularly regarding the governance of the NAIF portfolio (lacking stage-gate disbursement criteria) and the practical feasibility of training the required volume of master educators within the proposed timeframe.⁵⁸

Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives

- **Nepal:** The Government of Nepal officially approved the National AI Policy 2082 in August 2025.⁶² This policy acts as a strategic blueprint for integrating AI to drive national growth, specifically targeting improvements in agriculture, healthcare, and education.⁶⁴ Acknowledging infrastructural limitations, the policy explicitly mandates the establishment of high-speed internet, cloud infrastructure, and the construction of state-of-the-art Data Centers located in the High Mountainous and Himalayan regions to leverage natural cooling and green energy.⁶² It also emphasizes public-private partnerships, digital literacy, and the creation of legal frameworks to prevent bias, deepfakes, and privacy breaches.⁶²
- **Bangladesh:** Bangladesh introduced its draft National AI Policy in 2024, designed to seamlessly align with the government's "Smart Bangladesh 2041" economic vision. The framework is heavily weighted toward education and capacity building, proposing the creation of an AI research hub anchored by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to nurture talent early in the academic pipeline. Financing is planned through Public-Private Partnerships, establishing initial governance framing and ethical guidance.⁵⁸
- **Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka adopted a National AI Strategy and an accompanying AI White Paper in 2024.⁵⁸ The country utilizes a "principle-based governance" model managed through central coordination by a proposed National AI Center.⁵⁸ Rather than broad deployment, the strategy relies on specific "use-case pilots" funded through line ministries, heavily emphasizing rigorous measurement and evaluation of these pilots to ensure tangible public benefit and talent retention before scaling operations.⁵⁸
- **Maldives:** Demonstrating the geographic spread of AI readiness, the Maldives launched South Asia's first AI Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM) Report in July 2025, developed jointly by the National Centre for Information Technology (NCIT) and UNESCO.⁶⁷ This report functions as an evidence-based roadmap, identifying specific infrastructural gaps and providing a pathway for the ethical, inclusive, and human-centered deployment of AI across the dispersed island nation, supporting economic growth and youth empowerment.⁶⁷

South Asian Nation	Key Policy Instrument	Core Governance Mechanism	Strategic Priorities
India	2025 AI Governance Guidelines	DPI Integration, 6 Pillars, 7 Sutras	DEPA, Sandbox incentives, C2PA deepfake mitigation
Pakistan	National AI Policy (2025)	AI Regulatory Directorate, AI Council	NAIF venture funding, 1M professional training target
Nepal	National AI Policy 2082 (2025)	Institutional & Legal Framework	Green Data Centers in Himalayas, Agriculture/Health
Sri Lanka	National AI Strategy (2024)	Principle-Based Governance	Coordinated use-case pilots with rigorous measurement

The Middle East: Economic Diversification and Sectoral Precision

The Middle East approaches AI regulation through the lens of economic transformation. Wealthy Gulf states and technologically advanced nations in the Levant are leveraging AI as a critical mechanism for post-oil economic diversification and national security, utilizing highly tailored, sector-specific regulatory strategies.

Israel: Sector-Based Prudence

Israel has deliberately chosen not to enact a comprehensive, horizontal AI law, viewing such a rigid structure as detrimental to its globally competitive high-tech and defense sectors.⁶⁸ Instead, the nation relies on a highly pragmatic, sector-based approach directed by its December 2023 "Responsible Innovation" policy.⁶⁸ Domain regulators, such as the Ministry of Health and the Bank of Israel, are tasked with crafting fit-for-purpose rules adapted to the specific risks of medical AI or financial algorithms.⁶⁸

The primary legal backstop for AI in Israel is the Protection of Privacy Law (PPL) of 1981. Amendment 13 to the PPL, effective August 14, 2025, modernizes compliance duties and introduces stricter enforcement mechanisms.⁶⁸ For any AI system that processes personal data or executes automated decisions, the PPL renders privacy-by-design, transparency, and data security non-negotiable.⁶⁸ To clarify these obligations, the Privacy Protection Authority (PPA) issued draft AI guidance in February 2025, detailing how existing privacy statutes apply directly to algorithmic systems.⁶⁸ Concurrently, the National AI Program, spearheaded by the Innovation Authority, continuously funnels state budgets into computational infrastructure, natural language processing R&D, and regulatory sandboxes.⁶⁸

The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) employs a bifurcated legal architecture to govern AI.⁷⁰ Mainland UAE does not possess a single comprehensive AI law, instead utilizing a patchwork of strategic decrees. The National Strategy for AI 2031 sets a federal ambition for global AI leadership, guided by the Minister of State for AI and bolstered by Federal Decree Law No. 25 (the Law on the Project of Future Nature).⁷⁰ Conversely, the sophisticated financial free zones—the Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) and the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)—regulate AI by amending their bespoke data protection laws. Notably, the DIFC amended Article 10 of its Data Protection Regulations to establish a specific legal definition for "Autonomous and Semi-Autonomous systems," imposing strict processing constraints on algorithms capable of generating outputs based on human or self-defined purposes.⁷⁰

Saudi Arabia currently operates without formal, binding AI regulations, managing the sector through comprehensive guidelines issued by the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA).⁷⁰ The Draft AI Ethics Principles (September 2023) mandate fairness, privacy, reliability, and accountability across the AI lifecycle.⁷⁰ This was followed by the Generative AI Guidelines (January 2024), which establish critical practice standards for risk mitigation.⁷⁰ SDAIA mandates specific countermeasures for AI harms, including the implementation of watermarks and Know Your Customer (KYC) protocols for cloud server providers to prevent deepfakes, alongside content moderation systems and data filtering to curb misinformation.⁷⁰ Under Royal Order, SDAIA retains overarching authority to monitor compliance and transition these guidelines into mandatory law in the future.⁷⁰

Africa: Continental Coordination and Digital Sovereignty

African nations view artificial intelligence as an unparalleled tool for socio-economic transformation, yet remain acutely aware of the risks of digital colonization and the exploitation of the continent's data and labor. Consequently, governance efforts heavily prioritize protecting cultural integrity, expanding broadband access, and fostering unified continental standards.

The African Union: Continental AI Strategy

In a major stride toward unified governance, the African Union (AU) Executive Council endorsed the Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy in July 2024.⁷⁰ This strategy aims to align the proliferation of AI with the socio-economic goals of the AU's Agenda 2063.⁷⁰ The framework employs a phased rollout: Phase I (2025-2026) focuses strictly on establishing national governance frameworks, building human capacity, and mobilizing resources for broadband and high-performance computing infrastructure.⁷⁰ Phase II (2028 onwards) initiates the deployment of core regional projects, guided by an "African AI readiness index" and a dedicated monitoring and evaluation portal.⁷⁰

The AU strategy implements risk-based governance to protect rights and cultural integrity. High-risk systems—defined as those prone to perpetuating bias or generating significant environmental footprints—are subject to rigorous ethical reviews, impact assessments, and

transparency mandates.⁷⁰ Compliance across all tiers requires human oversight and robust data protection. Enforcement is distributed, requiring member states to "domesticate" the strategy via National AI Councils, independent oversight institutions, and the use of regulatory sandboxes for safe local innovation.⁷⁰

Key National Frameworks

- **Kenya:** As a leading tech hub in East Africa, Kenya is finalizing a comprehensive Draft National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2025-2030).⁷⁰ Recognizing that AI runs on data, the strategy places immense focus on a National Data Policy to guide legal access and the harmonization of regional cybersecurity laws to facilitate compliant cross-border data transfers.⁷⁰ The strategy is supported by the Information Technology AI Code of Practice drafted by the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), which mandates high standards of risk management and security from organizations deploying models.⁷⁰
- **Nigeria:** Africa's largest economy expanded its initial 2022 policy efforts into the comprehensive National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (NAIS) in August 2024.⁷⁰ The NAIS identifies four broad risk categories (economic, ethical, societal, and model risks) and formally adopts the "Identify, Assess, Mitigate, Monitor, and Review" procedure based entirely on the US NIST AI Risk Management Framework.⁷⁰ While Nigeria lacks a specific AI statute, enforcement is routed through the stringent Nigeria Data Protection Act of 2023 and the Cybercrimes Act of 2015.⁷⁰
- **South Africa:** South Africa released its Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework in August 2024, developed by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT) following extensive input from the Presidential 4IR Commission and the newly launched AI Institute.⁷⁰ The framework is rooted in the OECD recommendations and targets specific regulatory interventions regarding disinformation, copyright abuse aligned with WIPO standards, and labor market disruptions, setting the legal foundation for forthcoming parliamentary legislation.⁷⁰

Conclusion

The global architecture of artificial intelligence governance in 2026 is defined by profound regulatory divergence. Jurisdictions are no longer content with voluntary ethical declarations; they are actively operationalizing sovereign frameworks that reflect their unique geopolitical anxieties, economic imperatives, and socio-cultural values.

The European Union and Canada have committed to stringent, penalty-heavy, horizontal statutory regimes that prioritize ex-ante risk mitigation and fundamental rights. In doing so, they have fundamentally altered the compliance burdens for global developers, forcing a trickle-down alignment across international supply chains. Conversely, the Asia-Pacific bloc—led by Japan, Singapore, and South Korea—has championed a pro-innovation, soft-law approach, utilizing reputational deterrents ("name and shame"), technical testing toolkits (AI Verify), and sector-specific agility to foster rapid technological commercialization without rigid legislative bottlenecks.

Simultaneously, the United States remains a fragmented regulatory landscape, where sweeping state-level mandates in California, Colorado, and Utah force corporations to navigate a complex, highly localized compliance matrix in the absence of federal preemption. Crucially, emerging powers in South Asia, epitomized by India's 2025 AI Governance Guidelines, are forging a third, highly innovative path. By rejecting broad statutory bans in favor of "compliance-by-design," integrating AI directly into state-sponsored Digital Public Infrastructure, and leveraging techno-legal solutions like cryptographic watermarking, these nations seek to harness AI for massive socio-economic acceleration while deploying highly targeted countermeasures against localized harms.

Ultimately, multinational enterprises navigating this landscape can no longer rely on a monolithic corporate compliance strategy. The extraterritorial reach of the EU, the localized strictures of US states, and the infrastructure-integrated priorities of the Global South necessitate a highly adaptable, geographically nuanced approach to algorithmic development, data governance, and risk management.

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