dga | ALBRIGHT STONEBRIDGE GROUP

Stay ahead with us.

Insights

AI Impact Summit Raises India's Profile in Global AI Landscape amid Geopolitical Competition

Key Takeaways

- The first large-scale AI convening in the Global South, the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi drew broad international participation and elevated India's profile in the global AI landscape, reinforcing its ambition to shape the emerging AI transformation as a trusted partner of the U.S. and other like-minded countries.

- The limited Chinese presence at the summit, contrasted with more visible U.S. and allied delegations, underscored the intensifying geopolitical competition in AI, as deployments across the Global South accelerate in 2026.

- The adoption of the New Delhi Declaration by 89 signatories, including the U.S. and China, signals broad alignment on democratizing AI for economic and social development. However, the omission of "inclusivity," the renaming of the proposed "AI Safety Commons," and selective EU support for certain provisions reflect unresolved divergences over the scope and direction of global AI governance.

- AI adoption and diffusion emerged as the summit's core themes. Leaders emphasized the widening gap between frontier capability and real-world deployment, identifying measurable corporate and consumer adoption, particularly in the developing world, as a key benchmark of AI's long-term impact.

- Governance discussions expanded beyond safety to encompass economic impact, labor markets, linguistic diversity, and equitable access. Voluntary commitments by frontier labs, alongside India's deepfake and child safety measures, point to a policy approach that combines light-touch coordination with selective but strict regulation.

- Implementation of government and industry commitments will determine the summit's overall impact ahead of the 2027 convening in Switzerland. With India having secured major commitments from domestic conglomerates and global technology firms, future hosts and policymakers are likely to emphasize tangible local impact, sustained follow-through, and demonstrable economic returns.

India's big AI show yields consensus on "New Delhi Declaration"

The AI Impact Summit concluded on February 20, with the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration, endorsed by 89 countries and international organizations, including the U.S. and China. The achievement of such a consensus was significant given that the U.S. and UK abstained from the Paris AI summit declaration in 2025. The summit was the first of its kind hosted in the Global South and the largest to date with over 300,000 registered delegates and over 500 curated sessions during the week. Participation from over 20 heads of government, 60 government ministers, and 100+ C-level executives from major global companies raised India's profile and put the nation on the map of global AI infrastructure development and AI diffusion. The relatively low level of Chinese participation, contrasted with a large and visible U.S. government and corporate presence, accentuated the emerging geopolitical fault lines in the global AI landscape.

While the New Delhi Declaration reflects a broad global consensus around democratizing AI for economic and social development, certain provisions appear to have been softened under external pressure. Notably, the term "inclusivity," a central theme of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address, does not appear in the final text, and the originally-proposed "AI Safety Commons" was rebranded as a "Trusted AI Commons" during negotiations. The EU endorsed the Declaration while reportedly withholding support for specific deliverables it viewed as duplicating existing UN mechanisms.

Adoption and diffusion emerge as core challenges

The summit's overarching theme was the challenge of AI adoption and diffusion in the Global South. This was evident in the leaders' speeches, working group discussions, and a fireside chat between Infosys co-founder and Chairman Nandan Nilekani and Anthropic co-founder and CEO Dario Amodei, among other high profile side events. Participants coalesced around a shared understanding that while frontier AI capabilities were advancing rapidly, the gap between what is technically possible and what is being deployed at scale is widening. U.S. and Indian technology executives stressed that the focus therefore should remain on accelerating diffusion.

Even participants building leading-edge AI models and applications (mostly from U.S. companies) appeared to recognize that socioeconomic transformation requires deployment at population scale with impact that can be measured and replicated. To that end, the Global AI Impact Commons was launched at the summit, showcasing emerging, AI-driven solutions in agriculture, healthcare, education and governance that are being deployed at population scale in India and beyond.

AI governance through voluntary commitments and targeted rules

Indian government officials attempted to present a more expansive view of what AI governance could encompass. But AI safety was not a core summit theme, in contrast to the inaugural Bletchley Park convening. Rather, the New Delhi Frontier AI Impact Commitments, signed by leading frontier labs including Anthropic, OpenAI, Google, and Indian AI model leader Sarvam AI, explicitly covers:

- **Economic Impact:** Building a stronger evidence base of AI's economic impact with anonymized usage data on jobs and skills.
- **Linguistic Diversity:** Addressing cultural inclusion and ensuring that safety testing extends to multilingual AI capabilities.

These impact commitments signal a governance approach that treats labor disruption, linguistic inclusion, and equitable access as important concerns for the Global South. They also emphasize the Indian market's unique challenges given the country's large and diverse population.

The summit also surfaced issues where concerted regulatory interventions are underway or appear imminent. Two specific regulatory developments stood out in this regard:

- **Deepfake Regulation:** On February 10, India announced one of the world's strictest deepfake regulations, including takedown timelines of three hours. Although this remains restricted to companies operating in India, the timing of the announcement draws attention to India's regulatory approach and could produce a ripple effect.
- **Child Safety:** Following discussions between PM Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron, India appears poised to introduce age-based restrictions on social media use by minors, a move with direct implications for platforms operating in the Indian market, and one that might inspire others in the Global South to follow suit.

In terms of global AI standards, benchmarks, and evaluations discussed at previous AI summits, no concrete progress was made except for the adoption of the Trusted AI Commons, a repository of open-source tools and benchmarks announced at the summit that has yet to launch publicly.

The focus of the Bletchley Park Summit and the broader AI safety community on CBRN threats, enablement of cyber operations, and loss of control was much discussed at side-bar events during the week. But these themes were largely absent from the high-level public discussions among political and industry leaders. The position of the U.S. delegation continued to be against perceived excessive regulation. White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Director Michael Kratsios firmly asserted that the U.S. opposes any attempt to have an international AI governance mandate. China's absence in the discussions left the two key countries whose companies are largely driving the advancement of frontier AI development out of step with the original goals of the AI summit process. The AI safety community, which once again was out in force in New Delhi, remains concerned with U.S. refusal to prioritize the issue.

As noted in DGA-ASG's 2026 AI Decrypted Report, the AI safety community is already looking to other avenues beyond the summit series. This week in Paris, the International Association for Safe and Ethical AI (IASEAI), led by AI safety advocate Stuart Russell and whose board includes leading Chinese AI scientist Andrew Yao of Tsinghua University, will hold its second meeting, attracting at least 1,000 participants. Much of the focus of global AI governance efforts appears likely to shift to IASEAI and other safety-focused organizations that clearly favor the participation of Chinese AI organizations, researchers, and companies focused on the issue. There will be other conferences later in the year that will include Chinese (but not U.S.) delegations, including in Singapore and the World AI Conference in Shanghai in June, where government officials, safety researchers, and companies will discuss AI model and platform safety and security.

"Middle powers" assert sovereignty amid global competition

French President Emmanuel Macron referenced "sovereign AI" in his address, where he described France and India as sharing the same determination not to be dependent on a "totally U.S." or "totally Chinese" model for AI development and deployment. Dutch Prime

Minister Rob Jetten echoed this sentiment, calling for "middle powers" to act as a bridge between the Global North and South. Sovereign AI was discussed at length. The participants focused on the appropriate level of technology for a country like India, or other middle powers, to grow and maintain control over the AI stack, from critical minerals, to semiconductors, to AI models and data centers.

Despite signing the New Delhi Declaration, the U.S., for its part, used the summit as a platform to reframe the concept of sovereign AI on its own terms. Kratsios pitched sovereignty as "owning and using best-in-class technology" and positioned the U.S. as a partner to help countries achieve "strategic autonomy" rather than "self-containment." The U.S. government announced a series of initiatives, including expansion of the U.S.-led Pax Silica initiative to secure AI supply chains; the "AI Exports Program's National Champions Initiative;" a "U.S. Tech Corps" to support AI deployment in partner countries; a USD 200 million AI package for the Indo-Pacific region; and a new World Bank fund for AI adoption. India signed the Pax Silica Declaration on the margins of the summit, joining fellow signatories Australia, Greece, Israel, Japan, Qatar, Singapore, South Korea, UAE, and the UK.

Sovereignty will remain a contentious issue moving forward. All countries present signaled a desire to move up the AI value chain from consumer to producer. For example, Indian AI company Sarvam AI intends to build frontier models to rival global players, even as it concurrently develops small, contextual models to serve India's needs. This tension between global ambition and national sovereignty will shape the AI operating environment in India and beyond for years to come. U.S. hyperscalers, including Google and Microsoft, frontier model leaders OpenAI and Anthropic, and AI hardware leader Nvidia all announced new investments and partnerships in India before and during the summit. U.S. officials stressed that countries such as India should choose which parts of the AI stack to develop themselves, while relying on trusted U.S. technology for most of their AI requirements.

Democratizing AI resources through open source

The use of open source and open weight AI models emerged as a recurring theme at the summit, referenced in the New Delhi Declaration and widely discussed in closed-door sessions. For the Global South, open-source AI models, which come with lower costs, can be used as a foundation to build applications fine-tuned to local requirements. They are seen as a viable avenue for democratizing AI resources: increasing diffusion and adoption, enabling local customization, reducing dependency on foreign proprietary systems, and promoting transparency. Looking ahead, companies with open-source offerings, a sector currently dominated by Chinese AI labs, are likely to find a receptive policy environment across much of the Global South, again highlighting the incongruity of Chinese firms' absence from the summit.

Next steps and business implications

The AI Impact Summit signaled India's emergence as a priority AI investment and innovation hub, along with an increasing fragmentation in global AI governance, amid an intensifying competition to build infrastructure and scale adoption across Asia. Companies operating in the Indian market should anticipate continued policy focus on localization, linguistic inclusion,

education and skilling, and responsible deployment as India's AI transformation accelerates.
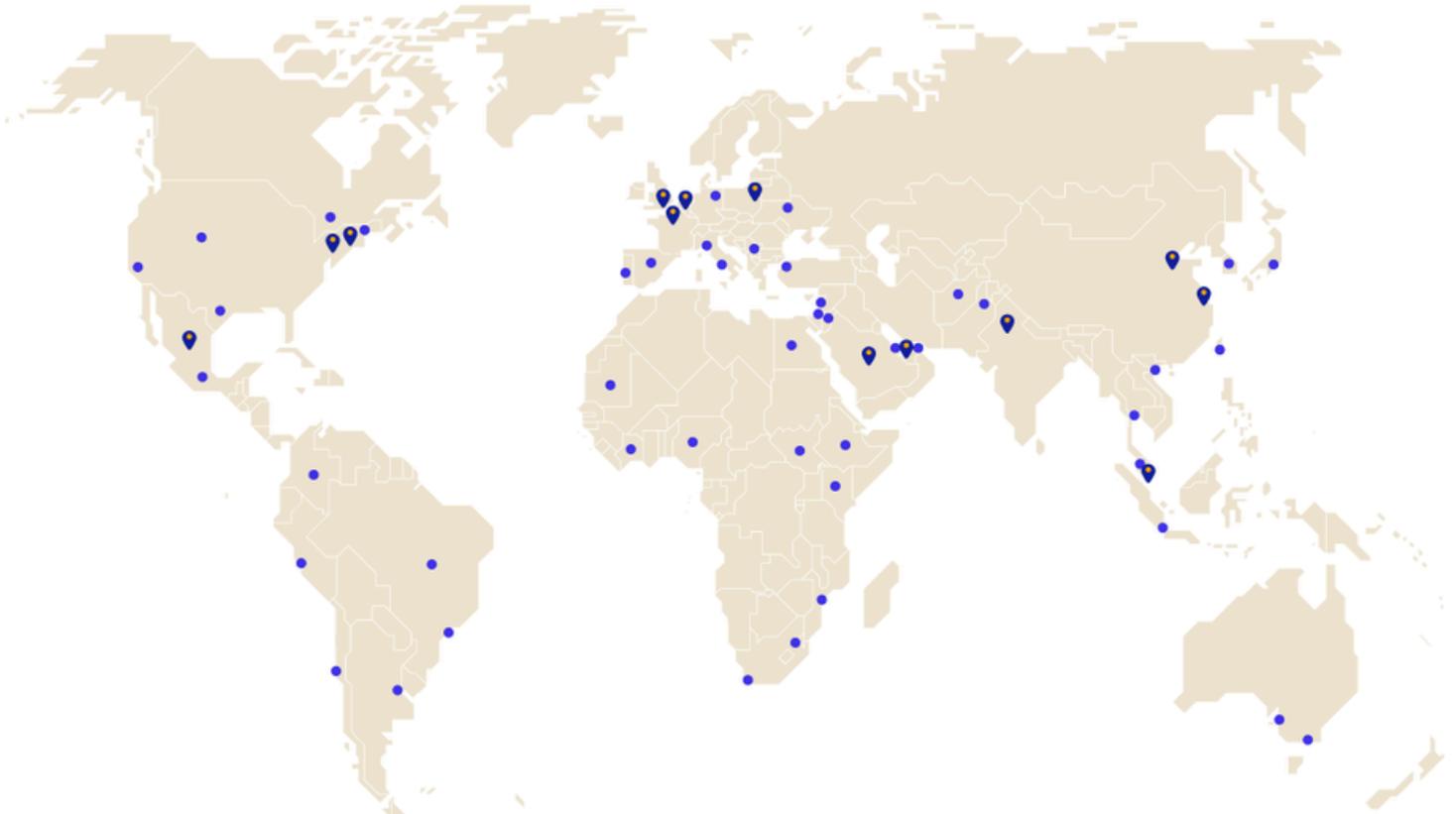
India leveraged the AI Impact Summit to raise its profile and secure significant investments in its AI infrastructure and capabilities that underscored the country's growing role in the global AI ecosystem. Indian tech giants stepped up, with Reliance pledging USD 110 billion and the Adani Group USD 100 billion in investment across the AI infrastructure energy stack, building on major data center investment announcements from Google, Microsoft, and Amazon, as well as the establishment of physical offices by Anthropic and OpenAI in India. Strategic partnerships, such as OpenAI's collaboration with Tata Services to build domestic AI infrastructure and Anthropic's partnership with Infosys to scale enterprise solutions, furthered this momentum. These announcements raise expectations that capital deployment will translate into adoption at scale, revenue generation, and demonstrable local economic impact.

Meanwhile AI safety is set to grow more complicated. Aspirations to develop a minimally viable global AI governance framework were not advanced in Delhi. Switzerland will host the next AI summit in 2027, followed by the UAE. Participating governments, institutions, and companies will seek to demonstrate progress on the Global AI Impact Commons, Trusted AI Commons, the Charter on Diffusion, and the voluntary commitments adopted in New Delhi. The extent to which these initiatives translate into measurable outcomes will shape public perceptions of the AI summit process going forward and influence the agenda of future hosts.

About Us

DGA Group is a global advisory firm that helps clients protect – and grow – what they have built in today's complex business environment. We understand the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly regulated and interconnected world. Leveraging the experience and expertise of **Albright Stonebridge Group**, a leader in global strategy and commercial diplomacy, and a deep bench of communications, public affairs, and government relations consultants, we help clients navigate and shape global policy, reputational and financial issues. To learn more, visit dgagroup.com.

Please contact **Sunita Patnaik**, Partner, at **Sunita.Patnaik@dgagroup.com**, **Atman Trivedi**, Partner, at **Atman.Trivedi@dgagroup.com**, **Paul Triolo**, Partner, at **Paul.Triolo@dgagroup.com**, and **Anthony Renzulli**, Associate Partner, at **Anthony.Renzulli@dgagroup.com** with any questions or to arrange a follow up conversation.

Global coverage for global needs.
13 offices | 46 extended locations