



# 5 Principles for AI Governance

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Governments around the world are awakening to the challenges posed by artificial intelligence, but their attempts to shoehorn AI into existing governance frameworks will fail. A policy challenge as unusual and pressing as governing AI demands an original solution that shares some of the characteristics that make this technology such a powerful force in the first place.

Because the evolution, applications, risks, and rewards of AI are so unpredictable, AI governance can't be fully specified at the outset. What AI governance can be, however, is guided by common principles that reflect AI's unique features as well as the emerging [technopolar order](#) that is putting tech companies in the driver's seat.

## There are five key principles that should guide AI governance:

**1. Precautionary:** AI governance must aim to prevent AI risks before they materialize rather than mitigate them after the fact when it may already be too late.

*Why?* Given the radical uncertainty about the scale and irreversibility of some of AI's potential harms, the risk-reward profile for AI is asymmetric. Maximally constraining AI would mean forgoing its life-altering upsides, but maximally liberating it would mean risking its potentially catastrophic downsides.

**2. Agile:** AI governance must be flexible and dynamic enough to adapt as quickly as the technology it seeks to contain evolves and improves itself.

*Why?* Public institutions often calcify to the point of being unable to adapt to change, sowing the seeds of their own obsolescence. The velocity of AI progress will overwhelm the ability of traditional governance structures to catch up and keep up before they even get off the ground.

**3. Inclusive:** AI governance must invite the participation of all actors needed to regulate AI in practice – most importantly technology companies, but also researchers, civil society, and other voices with knowledge of, power over, and a stake in AI outcomes.

*Why?* AI governance cannot be exclusively state-centered because governments neither understand nor control AI. Any policy-setting process that excludes technology companies – the primary agents of AI power – is doomed to fail.

**4. Impermeable:** AI governance must be as watertight as possible, covering not just every corner of the globe but also the entire AI supply chain and the whole technology stack, from manufacturing to hardware, software to services, and providers to users.

*Why?* Because a single bad actor or breakaway algorithm can create a universal threat, AI governance is only as good as the worst-governed country, company, or technology. Any one loophole, weak link, or rogue defector will open the door to widespread leakage, bad actors, or a regulatory race to the bottom. There can be no gaps.

**5. Targeted:** AI governance must target each distinct risk posed by AI with the most appropriate, specialized tools to address them, rather than take a one-size-fits-all approach to regulation.

*Why?* AI is a general-purpose technology that poses multidimensional threats. A blanket governance tool, approach, or point of intervention is insufficient to adequately address the various sources of AI risk. Policies must be tailored to address specific harms.

These principles can help policymakers draw up more granular governance frameworks to mitigate the risks to global stability posed by AI as it evolves and becomes a more pervasive force, without choking off AI innovation and the opportunities that flow from it.