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Toward AI as an international public good

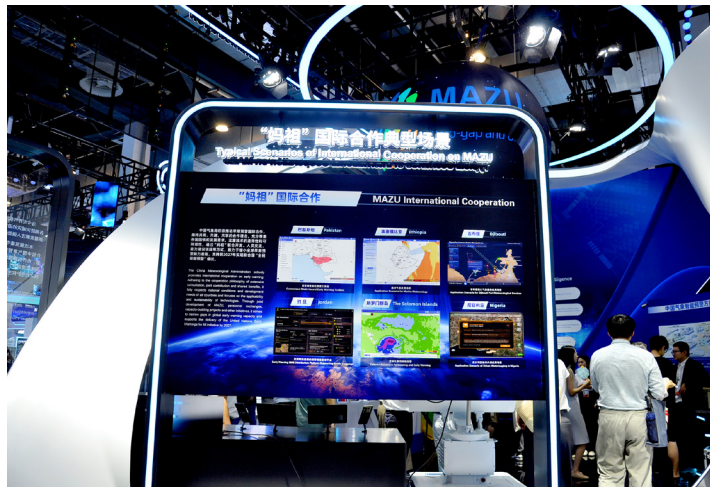
The essence of artificial intelligence (AI) governance lies in coordinating innovation, risk sharing, and benefit distribution under new technological conditions. From the perspective of global economic development, AI governance should not be reduced to technological regulation, nor should it be dictated entirely by geopolitical and geo-economic competition among major countries.

Open global innovation network needed

Technological revolutions and economic globalization are deeply intertwined. New technologies continually transcend the geographic boundaries of production, division of labor, and exchange, enabling knowledge, capital, products, and people to be reorganized on a broader scale. Global markets, meanwhile, provide the conditions for technological diffusion, large-scale application, and continued iteration. As a general-purpose technology with significant spillover effects, AI relies even more heavily on innovation networks built through broad collaboration.

AI's dependence on global innovation networks is particularly evident in two respects: the specialized division of labor across the innovation chain and the economies of scale and network effects generated by AI research and development (R&D) and application.

First, AI R&D and deployment



An introduction to international cooperation through the AI-powered meteorological early-warning system MAZU at the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai Photo: VCG

span multiple stages, including basic research, chip manufacturing, computing infrastructure, model training, software tools, application development, and safety assessment, forming a highly specialized and closely interconnected global innovation chain. No country can sustain innovation across all these stages over the long term while remaining isolated from global knowledge exchange and industrial collaboration.

AI R&D also requires substantial upfront investment. Expanding the use of models, tools, and infrastructure helps distribute R&D costs and improve the efficiency with which innovation resources are used, creating significant economies of scale.

At the same time, as more actors participate in AI development and use, and application scenarios become more diverse, the links among knowledge feedback, tool provision, and technological iteration grow stronger. This, in turn, enhances the overall value of the AI innovation ecosystem and creates network effects in which developers, users, and application scenarios reinforce one another.

Sharing development benefits

Emphasizing openness and cooperation among countries does not mean ignoring the risks associated with AI. As AI becomes increasingly embedded in production, finance,

healthcare, transportation, and public governance, risks such as algorithmic bias, privacy violations, misinformation, technological misuse, and loss of control over systems can spill across national borders.

A single country's regulatory framework may struggle to fully address these cross-border externalities. Without effective coordination among regulatory frameworks, gaps in oversight, conflicting standards, and rising compliance costs may result. Therefore, as AI becomes increasingly globalized, the need for corresponding global governance capacity grows.

Viewing AI as an international public good does not simply mean providing a particular technology, product, or service. Rather, the core aim is to make technology more accessible, usable, and governable through sustainable institutional arrangements. A people-centered approach and the sharing of development benefits represent a distinctive value orientation of Xi Jinping Thought on Economy, while also reflecting China's position that the benefits of intelligent technologies should reach people around the world more broadly.

President Xi Jinping stated in his congratulatory letter to the World Smart Industry Expo 2025 that "AI should be an international public good that benefits humanity." In his keynote speech at the 2026 World

Artificial Intelligence Conference, he further announced that, over the next five years, China will provide 5,000 AI training opportunities for developing countries and establish international AI application cooperation centers with ASEAN, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and BRICS. China will also promote the deployment of the AI-powered meteorological early-warning system MAZU in 30 countries. These initiatives translate the principle of inclusiveness into concrete public good provision through talent cultivation, platform building, and practical applications.

AI is expanding the technological foundations of the global division of labor and cooperation, while placing greater demands on the inclusiveness, coordination, and capacity for action of global governance. Looking ahead, countries should expand the space for innovation through open cooperation, manage cross-border risks through shared rules, and promote inclusive development through international public goods. In this way, technological progress can become a new driver of economic globalization toward greater openness, inclusiveness, shared benefits, balance, and mutual prosperity, rather than a force that creates divisions and widens disparities.

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Rhetoric offers lens for understanding society

Following the 20th-century "linguistic turn," language gradually became central to how scholars understand the world and construct knowledge. Yet much of language's power derives from rhetoric. As a means of making expression more effective, rhetoric seeks fundamentally to inform, persuade, or entertain an audience. Its value therefore emerges through interpersonal interaction, giving it an inherently social character. Contemporary rhetoric has, moreover, moved well beyond linguistic technique and the traditional realm of persuasion to become a fundamental lens for understanding social life.

Social implications

The social implications of rhetoric are perhaps most evident in the shift from a logic of "persuasion" to "identification." As rhetoric seeks identification, it inevitably extends into the shaping of social norms and public opinion. Through the repeated use of metaphorical frames and particular narratives, ideas about "how one should act" gradually take hold, giv-

ing rise to unwritten social rules.

Effective rhetoric can evoke particular emotions among audiences—such as fear, hope, and anger—while also framing issues, attributing causes, and assigning responsibility. In doing so, it may consolidate consensus or create divisions, shaping the direction of public opinion.

The pursuit of identification, however, does not mean that the public passively receives rhetoric. Instead, audiences interpret, discuss, and recirculate rhetorical messages, filtering, amplifying, or weakening their meaning. Rhetoric and public opinion therefore form a dynamic, mutually constitutive relationship. Once different forms of expression are recognized as capable of producing different social effects, particular rhetorical forms inevitably become subject to selection—and even regulation.

Rhetorical situation theory provides a systematic framework for understanding this social influence. The theory holds that, just as an answer arises in response to a question, rhetorical discourse emerges in response to the demands of a particular situation.

When this situational perspective is extended into the realm of knowledge, the social significance of rhetoric becomes evident in the reflexive nature of knowledge production itself. From a rhetorical standpoint, "facts," as accepted units of knowledge, come to be recognized through processes of argumentation. In this sense, knowledge production is fundamentally rooted in argumentation.

Contemporary features

Just as rhetoric reveals the situated nature of knowledge, rhetoric itself bears the distinct imprint of its time, reflecting the cultural character of a particular people. In China, this cultural character is particularly evident in its distinctive moral orientation. As stated in the *Book of Changes (I Ching)*, "His attention to his words and establishing his sincerity are the way by which he occupies in his sphere." The sentence underscores the role of rhetorical practice in self-cultivation and moral refinement. This strong ethical orientation stands in marked contrast to strands of the Western rhetorical tradition that at

times degenerated into sophistry. Here, "sincerity" (*cheng*) occupies a supreme moral status within Confucian thought.

Nevertheless, the characteristics of rhetoric in any given era are not static. In the West, rhetoric gradually shed the stigma of sophistry following the 20th-century linguistic turn and came to be regarded as a fundamental perspective for understanding social life and knowledge production. In China, rhetorical studies has remained closely intertwined with social transformation and national renewal. For example, the Literary Revolution during the May Fourth Movement marked a major shift in rhetorical practice. The promotion of vernacular Chinese at the time was not merely a reform of linguistic form, but also a means of reshaping social identification and advancing intellectual emancipation through rhetoric.

In contemporary society, advances in media technologies and the diversification of communication have given rise to entirely new forms of rhetorical practice. Phenomena such

as the "short-video style," "meme-based language," and "bullet-screen culture" in the digital-intelligent era retain rhetoric's traditional emphasis on emotional appeal while displaying unprecedented immediacy, interactivity, and fragmentation. The complexity of these developments underscores the contemporary importance of rhetorical criticism and calls for closer reflection on the power relations and value orientations embedded in rhetorical practice, as well as vigilance against the potential erosion of the virtue of "sincerity" by rhetorical techniques.

In conclusion, whether in the Confucian ethical principle of grounding rhetoric in sincerity, the close connection between modern rhetoric and social movements and intellectual emancipation, or the interactive communication and identity construction of the digital-intelligent era, rhetoric has never been merely a linguistic technique. Rather, it is a form of social practice that evolves alongside the spirit of its time. To reflect on rhetoric, therefore, is fundamentally to reflect on society itself.

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