Independent AI Key to India's Global Power

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By: Pravin Anand and Dr. Ajai Garg

The fourth industrial revolution, driven by artificial intelligence (AI), requires informed strategic decisions. India cannot be a mere participant. To lead this change, it has to put AI sovereignty at the forefront of policymaking. This not only moulds domestic technology but also allows India to take a leading role in a world where the geopolitical order is rapidly reshaping itself.

Sovereignty is the supreme and independent right of a state to govern itself. However, digital age sovereignty has evolved, no longer dealing solely with territorial boundaries. It controls intangible assets such as data, algorithms, computational infrastructure and standards. AI sovereignty is a state's governance, development and regulation of its AI systems in line with national interests and ethical and human standards. AI sovereignty is about control, not just capability.

The global AI movement involves complex political, economic, cultural and security interests. Sovereignty assures independence, reducing reliance on external factors that control technology and its usage. The domestic AI sector creates jobs, encourages innovation and attracts foreign investment. It ties intellectual property to the country, a vital consideration with AI forecast to increase global GDP by up to USD12 trillion by 2032.

Sovereign AI protects privacy through data processing regulation, prevents misinformation and deepfakes, enhances cybersecurity, defence and blocks non-state actors. It also aligns surveillance with national security and privacy laws and thereby promotes transparency and accountability.

India should embrace its vision of becoming a global AI power, based on responsible innovation and collaboration. This requires governments, industry, individuals and global institutions to adopt common perspectives. Its national imperative must be to exercise control over data, infrastructure, algorithms and regulation. At the same time, it must accept the private sector's need for innovation, citizens' rights to transparency and privacy and the global community's endeavour to harmonise norms.

AI sovereignty requires robust technology infrastructure, such as significant investment in chip technology, AI data centres, high-performance processing, access to GPU and local cloud systems. It also needs effective governance, upholding ethical, open and nationwide laws and regulations governing the use of technology and data. Domestic innovation through public-private-academic

collaboration is imperative for research and development. An educated and skilled workforce produced by a forward-looking education and skilling systems is essential. Transparent, responsive regulatory systems that safeguard rights while facilitating innovation are needed. A robust intellectual property rights protection framework is also central. Ethical principles, rooted in Indian constitutional values and its cultural ethos, should shape AI use for societal and economic benefits.

Reaping these rewards poses significant challenges. The high cost of investment is a burden for developing countries. The rapid rate of development, particularly in generative AI, may make long-term investment unattractive. Concentrating AI research in technologically developed countries widens global inequality. Global supply chains and knowledge networks hinder self-reliance. It is difficult to find highly skilled AI talent. The law, jurisprudence and regulation has to balance control against innovation; openness and international engagement against national security interests.

India should regard these obstacles as strategic design challenges to be solved by imagination. AI sovereignty brings many advantages. Increased national security reduces foreign cyber manipulation and ensures defence autonomy. The economy grows because of innovation, job creation and lessening reliance on external supply chains. Global technological leadership enables India to set standards. Importantly, it allows the ethical development of AI and technologies that serve, not surveil; empower not exploit.

AI sovereignty will bring power, prosperity and purpose. India can lead by design, principle and conviction by scaling investment in AI infrastructure, implementing a national AI strategy, reforming education, encouraging public-private innovation ecosystems and cultivating public involvement. India has to become not just a digital economy, but a digital democracy writing its own rules.

KEY CONTACT



Pravin Anand

Managing Partner

View Bio of Pravin Anand

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