

# GOVERNANCE BEYOND BORDERS:

## Rethinking Power in the Age of AI, Climate, and Space

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### *Introduction*

For millennia, governance has been tied to the idea of the nation-state—a framework where power is limited within borders, laws are territorial, and authority is tied to geography. However, since the 21st century, this prototype has been under strain from forces that cut across borders, governments, and even the planet. Artificial Intelligence (AI), global warming, and space exploration are three forces recasting power and governance, not only among states but also globally. AI is transforming economies, wars, and even political choices in ways that easily elude governmental control. Global warming, powered by industrialization, is an emergency no individual state can unilaterally reverse. And space, which once seemed the domain of distant fantasists, is rapidly becoming a military and economic frontier. Old governance paradigms are having trouble keeping up. The institutions that were designed for a land, border, and authority-based world aren't up to the challenge of a world where power is becoming digital, environmental, and planetary. If the governance does not adapt, it becomes at risk of being made irrelevant in a world that no longer follows its guidelines. Hence it is safe to say A World Without Walls is where we are heading in the 21st century.

### *Who is Accountable in the AI Era?*

The emergence of AI has upended one of the most basic assumptions of rule: who is in power, and who should be held accountable for its results. Traditionally, states exerted power by means of military might, economic decisions, and judicial systems. But today, some of the globe's most powerful forces aren't governments but algorithms. AI systems determine who qualifies for a loan and who becomes a target in warfare. Algorithms forecast stock trends, screen news, and shape elections without being accountable to voters, lawmak-

ers, or the public. This power is held by a few technology companies whose influence approaches that of nation-states. The regulatory reaction has been uneven.

-In Europe, the AI Act is promoting transparency and accountability, compelling firms to explain how their AI systems operate.

-China has embedded AI extensively in state surveillance and social control, making it both a governance tool and a tool of repression.

-The United States has largely abdicated AI regulation to the private sector favouring technological innovation over state control.

However, AI regulation cannot be limited to the borders of the nations. When Silicon Valley-created algorithms that could determine elections in Africa or when Chinese AI monitoring technology is sold all over the world, international governance institutions become a necessity. Others have suggested an AI regulator like the International Atomic Energy Agency to regulate its use across the globe. But with AI being used as a geopolitical tool now, international collaboration is not easy to achieve. If governance does not keep pace, AI will proceed to develop on its own, without regulation, moral limits, and responsibility—remaking society in ways that no government can entirely manage.

### *The Crisis of Climate Governance*

While the governance of AI is characterized by the absence of control, climate governance is inflicted with excessive fragmentation and minimal enforcement. Climate change is a global problem that does not recognize international borders, yet the reaction remains national, voluntary, and frequently futile. The Paris Agreement was welcomed as a global climate governance breakthrough, but its voluntarism has also turned out to be its biggest weakness. Each country established its own goal for reducing emissions, but there are no

consequences for not doing so. Therefore, most countries are not meeting their climate goals, and the global temperature keeps on rising.

The issue is not inaction but also inequality. Industrialized countries with high incomes that developed first have caused the most damage to the climate, while the developing world bears the brunt of its worst impacts—increasing sea levels, superstorms, and shortages of resources. While Western countries are debating modest reductions in emissions, nations of the Global South are already experiencing climate-related displacement and economic disintegration. There are governance solutions, but they are met with resistance. A global carbon tax, for example, in which high-emitting nations contribute to a fund used to assist in climate adaptation for vulnerable areas, is suggested by some experts.

Others call for a climate police agency that might levy fines against nations or companies that are not living up to environmental promises. But these suggestions conflict with the deeply rooted concept of national sovereignty—few nations are prepared to give up the reins on their economies, even to avert disaster. At the same time, non-state actors are filling the gaps left by governments. Cities have established independent coalitions, companies are being compelled to go green through consumer pressure, and activist movements such as Fridays for Future are keeping climate action on the political agenda. But without a binding global governance structure, these efforts are fragmented. The threat is obvious: if governments are unable to impose effective climate action, then the planet itself will soon be ungovernable.

### ***Who Owns Space Beyond Earth?***

As AI and climate control the fight within the boundaries of Earth, Space control is a different challenge altogether—because, by law, no one controls space. The Outer Space Treaty (1967) stated that celestial bodies are the property of all humankind, excluding national claims on the moon, Mars, or asteroids. However, this idea is being tested by reality today. Private enterprises such as SpaceX, Blue Origin, and Astrobotic are charting resource mining on asteroids and the Moon, claiming the Outer Space Treaty does not cover corpo-

rations. The initiated Artemis Accords seek to make regulations on lunar mining, but China and Russia do not accept them, opting for their own system. Since there is no evident governance mechanism, space is already in the process of becoming an occupied area.

The potential for this conflict is strong. Who mines resources in space? Who polices the environment outside of Earth? And can space be kept demilitarized while states are already putting up military satellites and anti-satellite weapons? The lack of regulation paves the way for a new era of space race—one motivated not by exploration, but by economic and military rivalry. Unchecked, space would become a new arena of geopolitical competition and exploitation of resources replicating Earth's colonial pasts. The test is evident: governance needs to evolve before space is another lawless frontier of war and disparity.

### ***The Future of Governance: A Choice Between Adaptation or Obsolescence***

The crises of AI, climate change, and space governance expose a fundamental flaw in our current systems—they were designed for a world defined by nation-states, physical borders, and territorial power, not for an era shaped by technology, global interdependence, and interplanetary ambitions. Governance now faces a critical choice: evolve to meet the realities of the 21st century or risk becoming obsolete. The solutions will not be simple, but they are necessary. AI regulation must shift from corporate control to democratic oversight, ensuring that AI serves humanity rather than a handful of powerful tech corporations. Climate policies must move beyond voluntary agreements to enforceable, binding regulations that hold nations and industries accountable for pollution and ecological destruction. Space governance, still in its infancy, requires urgent intervention to establish clear rules for resource use, demilitarization, and cooperative exploration before conflicts arise. The world is no longer bound by its traditional borders—power is shifting toward digital intelligence, global crises, and an emerging reality where the new rules of governance have yet to be written. The question is no longer whether governance must change, but whether it will do so in time.