

STATE: Out of the Box?

AYAAN SOLANKI | B.A.(H) POLITICAL SCIENCE (III YEAR) | DESHBANDHU COLLEGE

EMAIL ID: ASOLANKI2511@GMAIL.COM

The World No Longer Fits Inside Borders

Up until now, most of human history has been centred around governance on physical land, political control, and national institutions. The norms that governed societies—be they democratic, authoritarian, or a mix—operated within distinct state borders. But now, the world's biggest problems—Artificial Intelligence (AI), climate change, and space exploration—no longer heed borders. *AI is created by companies, but it dominates human lives as states do.*

Climate change results from some but is endured by all, with no individual global enforcer. Space, which was initially the realm of states, is now commercialised, militarised, and fought over.

The idea of “Governance Unbound” was born out of this change. How do we govern when intelligence is no longer exclusively human? How do we apply environmental policy when pollution and rising tides disregard sovereignty? How do we regulate space when corporations, not simply states, are scrambling to stake claims on celestial resources?

This is the crisis that will define our times: either we change how we govern ourselves in this new, borderless world, or risk chaos, injustice, and worldwide conflict.

AI and Governance: The Digital Leviathan

In 1651, Thomas Hobbes published *Leviathan*, contending that there must be a powerful state to ward off anarchy and chaos. Now, Artificial Intelligence is giving rise to a new form of Leviathan—not ruled by the

state, but by private conglomerates, algorithms, and massive digital webs. Governments everywhere are struggling to control AI, with wildly varying strategies:

- The European Union is spearheading the development of ethical AI governance with legislation such as the AI Act, calling for transparency and accountability in AI decision-making.
- The United States values market-driven innovation, with most AI development being left to the likes of OpenAI, Google, and Microsoft.
- China has adopted AI as an instrument of state power, incorporating it into surveillance, governance, and social credit systems.

Who Governs AI?

Despite these policies, the actual power over AI does not rest in the hands of governments. The most advanced AI systems in the world—ChatGPT, DeepMind, Bard—are developed by companies, not states. Their algorithms determine economies, societies, and even elections, without democratic control in many cases.

Where countries are competing for AI dominance, cooperation isn't around the corner. A lack of global governance might cause AI to be weaponized, abused, or monopolized, exacerbating inequality and social unrest.

The Leviathan is No Longer Human

AI's ascendance undermines the conventional notion of governance. In an era where algorithms forecast elections, make legal rulings, and shape human decisions, who is actually in control? Governments can

continue to enact legislation, but the actual governors of the digital world are no longer human—they are machines.

Can We Govern the Planet?

If corporations control AI, then climate governance is plagued by a different crisis—global fragmentation. Climate change is the most pressing existential crisis of our generation, and no single state or entity has the authority to mandate action.

The Paris Agreement (2015) was a high point of global cooperation, but its efficacy is extremely controversial. Countries establish

Whereas national governments can sanction polluters, there is no global enforcer of climate obligations. Rather, we have a mosaic of actors filling in where governments have faltered:

- Cities are creating stand-alone climate alliances, such as the C40 Cities network.
- Companies are greenifying, but usually as public relations manoeuvres rather than profound commitments.
- Activist movements such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion are compelling governments—but lacking enforcement authority.



Others have proposed establishing a global climate enforcement agency, with the power to penalize large emitters. But in a world where sovereignty is still inviolate, few countries are ready to give up authority—even in the face of global disaster.

So, *Can We Govern the Planet?*

Climate change is the final test of

their voluntary climate targets, but there are no penalties for not achieving them. This is a crisis of accountability:

The United States pulled out of the Paris Agreement during Trump, demonstrating how climate pledges can be undone. China and India, two of the biggest emitters, believe that historical polluters (Western countries) must be held accountable for the largest burden. The worst climate catastrophes beset developing nations but with limited financial resources to apply large-scale solutions.

The Problem of No Global Enforcer

governance. If we cannot make environmental policies stick across borders, then is global governance at all possible? Will climate change be an ungovernable crisis, hurtling toward calamity as governments fight over who's responsible?

The Final Frontier: Who Rules the Cosmos?

While climate and AI are still terrestrial concerns, a new governance challenge is arising in space. The universe, previously the playground of superpowers and science, is increasingly becoming a commercial, economic, and military arena.

The Outer Space Treaty (1967) was designed to discourage space colonization, declaring that celestial objects “belong to all human-kind”. This is now being contested by:

- Private firms such as SpaceX and Blue Origin who aim to extract resources from asteroids and the Moon.
- The Artemis Accords (initiated by the U.S.), advancing space resource mining, and prompting concerns regarding the privatization of space.
- China and Russia, constructing competing space programs, fearing U.S. hegemony. Space: The Next Colonial Battlefield?

Without robust governance, space may become the next arena of geopolitical rivalry. Who owns the Moon? Who owns Mars? Who benefits from asteroid mining? If we do not rethink space governance today, we risk reliving Earth’s colonial past—this time in space.

Conclusion: Governance Must Evolve or Collapse

The AI crises, climate crises, and space governance crises show us the core truth: the state-based model of governance is no longer viable. The 21st century requires new models that transcend borders. The governance of the future will be based on radical adaptation. AI governance must curb the unchecked dominance of corporations and ensure ethical responsibility in its development and deployment. Climate governance must transition from voluntary commitments to legally binding actions, creating real accountability for environmental impact. Space governance, still in its formative stages, needs urgent redefinition to prevent an interplanetary land rush and resource conflicts. The world is no longer solely controlled by nation-states—corporations, international institutions, and decentralized movements now shape governance in ways never seen before. Whether we choose to adapt to this shift or resist it will determine

not just the future of nations, but the fate of civilization itself. The world no longer exists within fixed borders—governance must evolve, or it will become obsolete.