

The India–Japan Partnership And The Future Of Human-Centric AI

C Raj Kumar Jun 17, 2026

The impact of AI on both India and Japan provide opportunities for developing a partnership to jointly address the future of global AI governance



The extraordinary influence and impact of artificial intelligence on societies across all sectors is one of the most compelling stories of our time. AI is re-imagining economies, education, healthcare, science, technology, governance, and social, civic and political life. The International Monetary Fund has projected that nearly 40 per cent of global employment is impacted by AI. This will increase to 60 per cent in advanced economies. While this does not imply immediate large-scale layoffs, early signs of labour market disruption are already visible.

As far as India is concerned, this unique challenge is critical because employment, the aspirations of young people, and social mobility need to be addressed. On the other hand, AI impacts Japan in a very different manner and has made Japan ask a very important question: How can and in what manner can the contours of technology help and support an ageing society, while not adversely impacting human dignity and community consciousness?

This unique historical juncture and the impact of AI on both India and Japan provide opportunities for developing a partnership to jointly address the future of global AI governance.

Worldwide, the debate relating to AI is based on three unique imaginations. The US model of AI governance favours a market-led innovation economy, the European model focuses on the development of a rights-based regulatory regime, and the Chinese model endorses a largely state-led and technologically controlled society.

A Fourth Way for Global AI: The Human-Centric Approach

India and Japan are at a crossroads. There is an opportunity to develop a fourth and original pathway: human-centric AI. The vision of a human-centric AI is deeply embedded in the principles of democracy, social contract, civilisational heritage, and equitable and inclusive development.

There are powerful intellectual foundations in Japan for this model, articulated in the vision of Society 5.0. It has established the idea of a human-centred society in which economic development and the ability to solve societal challenges need to be integrated.

As far as India is concerned, the extraordinary leadership in technological transformation has been led by digital public infrastructure, the India AI Mission, the expansion of digital governance platforms, and the growing availability of a qualified talent base, making India a formidable partner for Japan.

If India and Japan could come together and develop an AI governance model that goes beyond asking what algorithms can do, and instead asks how algorithms can help in a society where technology would serve its people, these dimensions of AI governance require serious consideration.

First, AI must protect the dignity of people and not substitute human purpose. Second, a human-centric approach to AI should augment and expand human capability and not in any way undermine the imagination of human beings.

AI Must Empower People, Not Replace Them

This issue of expanding human capabilities is critical for developing countries such as India, where the question of youth employment cannot be isolated from social integration, national development, and societal aspirations. We need to recognise that deployment of AI without safeguards does have implications for displacing labour, undermining various entry-level jobs and employment potential, and possibly even expanding the inequalities that are already prevailing in our society.

The focus on AI to increase productivity is understandable. However, we need to avoid an AI model in which it becomes an inevitable instrument for jobless growth.

In this context, the experience of Japan as an advanced economy and a technology-based society is relevant. Japan, for many decades, has been leading the effort to integrate robotics and technological automation to deal with its own challenges of labour shortages. It has also used technology to improve efficiency, enhance precision, and augment its manufacturing capacities. All these aspects have helped Japan address the challenge of an ageing population.

The agenda-setting role of the future of AI governance, as far as the India-Japan AI partnership is concerned, should focus on AI empowering work rather than AI replacing workers. The public policy dimension for AI governance in India should make people more productive and efficient, not less relevant and disposable.

Building Democratic and Inclusive AI Governance

AI governance also needs to be democratic and reliable. AI systems will dominate and influence future decision-making relating to financial governance, credit systems, job opportunities, policing, education, and even social security and welfare policies. Our ability to provide guardrails and develop systems that are transparent, unbiased, and accountable will ensure that AI governance is in conformity with constitutional values as well as public trust.

India and Japan need to work together and provide leadership for building democratic and inclusive AI governance models based upon respect for privacy, ethics, fairness, safety, and security.

The Hiroshima AI Process and India's evolving AI governance framework have established a strong foundation for a viable partnership between India and Japan. India and Japan may come together to formulate globally measurable quality benchmarks, testing systems, risk assessment standards, audit mechanisms, and sector-specific policies for AI in education, finance, law and justice, healthcare, infrastructure, public policy, public services, and employment.

A jointly established India-Japan Centre for Human-Centric AI Governance could become an opportunity for universities, scientists, industry experts, regulators, public policy officials, parliamentarians, media, civil society, and technologists from both countries to work together on addressing these challenges.

Putting AI to Work for Society

Third, AI should not only focus on commercial sectors but should pay attention to social sectors as well. AI has the potential to expand and improve access to education, medical services, sustainable agricultural practices, disease detection, vernacular translation of knowledge into various Indian languages, and the delivery of public services.

In Japan, AI has already begun to support elder care, disaster preparedness, remote health monitoring, urban planning, and healthcare interventions for promoting assistive technologies that will empower differently abled people.

The vision of a human-centric AI agenda for India and Japan should identify five social sectors that are of critical relevance for both countries: Healthcare; Education; Agriculture; Ageing Population; Disaster preparedness and mitigation.

Protecting Culture, Language, and Civilisational Heritage

AI ought to recognise culture, language, and civilisational heritage. There is a genuine concern that dominant AI models, which are largely evolved on English language data and western cultural systems, have the risk of marginalising cultural diversity.

India and Japan can together make a case that AI governance needs to protect linguistic diversity, local knowledge, community engagement, cultural and civilisational heritage, pluralistic imagination, and ethical traditions.

Together with the depth of Indian civilisation and Japanese technological sophistication, an AI model can be produced that celebrates and protects memory, culture, tradition, history, and plurality.

Five Pillars for an India–Japan Human-Centric AI Partnership

India and Japan have a rare, strategically and historically evolved friendship. This goodwill can be translated into trust that can help develop more robust cooperation in AI research, semiconductors, data governance, digital public infrastructure, cyber governance, internet security, and skills development.

India and Japan should launch a human-centric AI governance partnership with five critical pillars: Joint research; AI for social sectors; Ethical AI standards; AI skills and talent exchange; AI-based public policy initiatives.

The Way Forward: A Fourth Way for Global AI

The vision for a fourth way for global AI would require India and Japan to recognise that the future of AI will not only be assessed on the sophistication of technology-based programs and algorithms, but also on the most fundamental principle of whether technology is able to strengthen human freedom.

Can technology provide human dignity? Can AI help build human creativity? Can AI create new employment potential? Can AI build care for the physically challenged, the elderly, and the marginalised? Finally, can AI build the public trust that ought to be at the centre of human-centric AI governance?

When India and Japan come together, we will be able to develop a fourth way in AI governance. This fourth way is going to be unique because it will not only be market-driven, bureaucratic, or state-controlled, but human-centric, deeply democratic, consciously inclusive, and based upon civilisational heritage.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publication.

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