

China Development Forum 2026

China in Its 15th Five-Year Plan Period: Advancing High-Quality Development and Creating New Opportunities Together

Symposium on AI Governance: Challenges and Cooperation (Panel Discussion II)

The China Development Forum 2026, hosted by the Development Research Centre of the State Council and organized by the China Development Research Foundation, was held on March 22-23, 2026 at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing. On the afternoon of March 23, the Symposium on AI Governance: Challenges and Cooperation was convened. The panelists for Panel Discussion II were Magdalena Skipper, Editor-in-Chief, *Nature*; ZHANG Wenzhong, Founder, Wumart & DMALL; Denis Depoux, Global Managing Director, Roland Berger; HAN Bicheng, Founder & CEO, BrainCo. The session was chaired by LI Zuojun, Director-General of the Institute of Public Administration and Human Resources, Development Research Centre of the State Council.

Magdalena Skipper noted that AI is profoundly transforming the way humans work, innovate, and conduct scientific research. However, the current development of AI is unbalanced, making it urgent to establish a scientifically sound and unified governance framework. There is a lack of sufficient consultation and discussion on AI regulation. Cutting-edge

AI and machine learning research results are concentrated mainly in the private sector, much of which remains unpublished, un-peer-reviewed, and in a “black box” state. Technical capabilities, data resources, and computing power are concentrated in the hands of a few countries and companies, and there is a notable gap between academia and industry. To promote the healthy development of AI, efforts to build open and shared resources should be strengthened, and the open-source ecosystem should be advanced.

Skipper argued that commercial research and academic publishing are not in opposition. The business environment should not become an obstacle to open academic research. Peer review is the cornerstone of academic research, and mechanisms such as anonymous review can enhance mutual trust, accelerate AI development, and help guard against both short- and long-term risks. If AI is to gain autonomy in the future, it will be essential to clarify ethical boundaries and accountability, and to accelerate the development of internationally unified scientific evaluation standards and safety frameworks. Just as scientific progress itself depends on global collaboration, so too must the development of relevant ethical standards. At present, there is a lack of unified international norms and cooperation in data sharing, privacy protection, and innovation implementation. Encouragingly, a growing number of people are working to harmonize rules and standards. In the future, the process of establishing norms for AI development should bring together representatives from around the world, including those from Global South countries, as well as from academia, the private sector, policymakers, political figures, and civil society. The future of AI governance requires joint efforts from all.

ZHANG Wenzhong shared his views on four aspects regarding the challenges and opportunities brought by the current development of AI.

First, as AI rapidly integrates into various industries, while creating tremendous value for people, it also brings prominent governance challenges, including the risk of technology misuse, the potential for system failures, issues of responsibility attribution, data security, and privacy protection. Second, in the face of these challenges and opportunities, enhancing the foresight and effectiveness of AI governance is fundamental. This includes four key points: (1) Scenario-based risk assessment. Governance of AI cannot be discussed in general terms; it must be closely tied to specific application contexts. (2) Data-driven early warning, which involves using data to monitor the health of AI information. For example, intelligent ordering, replenishment, display, and real-time AI monitoring across the entire chain have become very important. (3) Interdisciplinary collaboration. AI governance involves not only technical issues but also requires integration with law, ethics, sociology, and other disciplines to jointly propose comprehensive solutions. (4) AI development must be supported by a progressive governance framework, avoiding a “one-size-fits-all” or “shock therapy” approach, and instead pursuing dynamic optimization and continuous improvement through governance. Third, balancing risk governance and technological innovation is the core of healthy industry development. Primarily, governance should be value-creation oriented, advancing AI applications to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and stimulate industry vitality. Next, safety and efficiency should be given equal emphasis. Furthermore, a tiered and categorized management approach should be implemented. Ultimately, responsible innovation should be encouraged, aligning commercial value with social value. Fourth, AI is a global technology, making international cooperation essential. It is necessary to establish dialogue mechanisms, share best practices and experience models, and develop international standards to effectively address global

challenges.

Denis Depoux believed that AI governance is essential and must take priority over purely commercial considerations. He advocates for prudent regulation rather than restrictions that hinder development. Based on a survey of 200 companies, he put forward the core argument that “AI governance is a crucial element for achieving competitive advantages.” While AI is advancing rapidly, it also raises multiple concerns, such as job uncertainty, workforce displacement, data privacy breaches, and the impact of generated content on the values of young people.

In his view, governance is first and foremost top-down and requires a careful balance. Companies operating in a fast-changing technological environment often suffer from “fear of missing out,” worrying that they may lose development opportunities, and therefore tend to overlook considerations such as transparency, safety, and ethics. What companies care about is whether AI can help them improve competitiveness through greater speed, lower costs, and higher efficiency, not governance. However, if governance is not made a priority, it could lead to significant problems down the road. Depoux emphasized that AI governance is not a constraint but rather a source of competitive advantage for both countries and companies. Companies should prioritize AI governance, build intelligent centralized or distributed architectures, implement dynamic risk management, and rely on both technology and people. By doing so, they may achieve greater success in compliance, economic returns, and risk forecasting.

HAN Bicheng noted that emerging technologies are extremely important to their users, and expressed his hope that good technologies can be first applied to those who need them most, especially vulnerable groups. For example, brain-computer interface technology could, in the future, help disabled people regain the freedom to move, help children

with autism speak again, and help those with poor sleep quality once again enjoy restful sleep. If the development of powerful platform technologies is properly guided, they can play a significant role in promoting progress across various fields and industries.

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— Background Information —

The China Development Forum (CDF) is hosted by the Development Research Centre of the State Council and organized by the China Development Research Foundation. Since its inception in 2000, the Forum has been dedicated to the mission of “engaging with the world for common prosperity.” It has served as an important platform for high-level, professional dialogue among China’s senior government officials, global business leaders, representatives from international organizations, as well as scholars from both China and around the world.



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