

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

Event

Exploring Global AI Policy Priorities Ahead of the India AI  
Impact Summit

**Panel 1 – Reflections on Paris and Prospects for New  
Delhi**

DATE

**Friday, January 30, 2026 at 9:20 a.m. ET**

FEATURING

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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Gregory C. Allen: Well, good morning. And thank you all for coming to CSIS today. We have a very exciting opportunity here connecting the two hosts of the past and the current AI summits. These summits have demonstrated a profound ability to shape the global conversation on artificial intelligence. And I think we all saw that in action at the Paris AI Action Summit, which was cohosted, actually, by France and India. And now, with the India AI Impact Summit, the eyes of the world are turning to Delhi, where we will see the new vision for AI coming out of India that is more inclusive of the Global South and includes an extraordinary diversity of events and activities, about which we are all very excited.

My name is Gregory Allen. I'm the senior advisor at the Wadhvani AI Center here at CSIS, the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I am the AI guy here. All AI all the time. And so this summit is a big, exciting opportunity for me. I'm recently returned from Delhi with my colleague Rick Rossow, our India chair, and now really excited to come back. So please join me in welcoming our two ambassadors, Ambassador Kwatra, from India to the United States, and Ambassador Bili, from France to the United States. (Applause.)

So, Ambassador Kwatra, let me begin with you. The India AI Impact Summit is only a handful of weeks away. And we've already heard a great deal about what India's priorities are, because there have been hundreds of pre-events as part of this summit. It really has been the year of the India AI Impact Summit. And this event is, in fact, an official pre-event of the AI Impact Summit. But let me just give you the opening opportunity to say what we should expect and be excited for about this summit, and what you're doing to make it happen.

Ambassador Vinay Kwatra: Sure. Thank you very much. And thanks, first of all, for inviting me and giving this opportunity to the embassy to speak about the AI summit. Great to be with my colleague and old friend, our Ambassador of France is here, Laurent.

A few things I would say, insofar as the upcoming Indian AI summit is concerned. One, this is the first time that the summit is taking place in a Global South country. It's therefore of great consequence that it captures the significance that the technology, per se, and AI in particular, holds for the countries of the Global South – indeed, of course, for the rest of the world also. As a result, the summit is being anchored on three major platforms. We call it three sutras, essentially.

The first sutra – our first anchor of it is people. Essentially, underlying theme there is that the cultural diversity of people, the dignity of people, and the access of people to the technology is ensured. That's the people part of it. It will then translate into several technological

aspects of it, but that's for the people who work on the models and lead to their adoption would sort of do that.

The second part of it, which is important, is the planet. The idea is that any technology is not centered just on a particular geography, but is available for the progress of the planet. Embedded in it as an aspect of what in India is called as frugal innovation, in terms of optimization of resources that lead to this technology innovation.

And third, of course, is the sutra of progress. Which is that it has to lead to the economic and the technological progress and prosperity of the society.

If we distill it into, let's say, a single phrase, not really capturing the entirety of summit but the sense of it, it is what my prime minister has said, the need to democratize AI. Which means ensure that it is available, accessible to people at large in a very easy manner on which they can then adopt, innovate, diffuse to scale. So I think that's the frame in which the summit would proceed for the democratization of AI, for the benefit of the society, centered around the three anchors of, as I said, people, planet, and progress.

Mr. Allen: Terrific. Thank you so much.

Ambassador Bili, we've seen a lot of cooperation between France and India not just in the previous summit, but in this coming up period to the summit with the India-France AI Policy Roundtable in November. So how do you think about continuing the legacy of the Paris AI Action Summit? And what specific events or contributions will France be bringing to the summit week in New Delhi?

Ambassador Laurent Bili: Well, thanks a lot for having me, and always a pleasure to be with my friend Ambassador Kwatra.

As you mentioned, France and India have got a very special partnership going back two decade(s), and in these last months it was very much focused on AI. Prime Minister Modi and President Macron co-host the AI Action Summit in Paris. I think you were there, so you enjoy it.

Mr. Allen: I did. (Laughter.)

Amb. Bili: And since then we have been working on preparing the Delhi Impact Summit. And so in the same way, President Macron will head to Delhi with a big delegation – with several ministers, researcher, private sector. And we will – as a direct contribution, we will also have a lot of side event organized together with India on the implementation part of

Paris Action Summit, especially regarding sustainable AI and public interest AI. So it's really about going further.

Mr. Allen: Great.

Amb. Kwatra: Can I just complement, Greg –

Mr. Allen: Please.

Amb. Kwatra: – that for a minute? Because Laurent talked about the package that came out of the Paris Summit which we were privileged to co-host with France and the implementation part of it.

One of the key aspects of the upcoming summit in New Delhi is going to be – it's embedded in the title of the AI – it's called the impact – it's called AI Impact Summit. And the idea is that society at large when it comes to deploying technology should move more towards outcome and implementation, what Laurent referred to, rather than just remain – confine itself to the regulatory and the other aspects of it. So impact part, as I said, about – on the three anchors will essentially define how the summit progresses in terms of its agenda and discussions.

Mr. Allen: So, well, thank you.

And, Ambassador Bili, it's been now a year since the Paris AI Action Summit. And as you look back, what were the most important successes? Where did it fall short? What sort of advice would you give to your Indian colleagues as they're putting on a spectacle such as this one?

Amb. Bili: So, since we co-host the summit, we, I think, share exactly where we are. But looking back, I think there were – first goal was really about moving a bit the discussion –

Mr. Allen: Changing the global narrative.

Amb. Bili: Yeah, and especially not to be too defensive about safety but also thinking about all what is really the benefit, the good of AI on the future of work, health care, environmental sustainability, global governance, health, this kind of issue.

The second part I think we have been able to have tangible outputs, including the launch of current AI Act. I mentioned the international coalition on sustainable AI. So publication of the International AI Safety Report and dozen of concrete project demonstrating AI for the public school.

Having said that, even if we are very good it's not the end of the story. Things move very fast and the technology is moving very fast. So there is always a risk that we – that we are a bit behind what is really happening.

And we start a process also to bring more countries in the picture, and I think Delhi will go even further. We don't want AI to be restricted to a small group of countries.

But another thing, it's really about also the implementation part and going further on that, and avoiding that we – because the technology is moving so fast that we have also fragmented world about regulation, the way to handle AI. So I think that's where I think it will be very important to continue to discuss in Delhi.

Mr. Allen: Great.

And, Ambassador Kwatra, for this upcoming summit there's a weeklong agenda including the AI Impact Expo, the research symposium, a CEO roundtable, and will culminate we presume in a leaders declaration. Can you walk us through these different components and explain what they're all intended to achieve – how the parts fit together to make them whole?

Amb. Kwatra: Yeah. Yeah.

You know, the parts would clearly indicate to you that we are trying to achieve what we – what I would call as a full stack AI summit.

Yes, there would be an AI Impact Expo. We are expecting about 400-plus exhibitors from about 30-plus countries to exhibit during this expo. It would be divided among 10 specific domains which would allow capacities in each domain – agriculture, health care, governance, industry segments – to be – to be showcased in this exhibition.

Naturally, part of this, I'm assuming here, exhibitors would also focus not just on safety and reliability of AI but also commercial viability propositions involved in AI use in a segmented domain.

Our research symposiums are intrinsic part of this technology in any way. To the best of my knowledge, right now currently about 300-plus parallel sessions are being planned in which different participants would be speaking about this technology and its various facets.

Naturally, that would have a strong research component to it, especially including what the possible future directions of these technology streams might be, not just limited, perhaps, to the LLM models but also going to the new aspects of AI that are being talked about.

A CEO roundtable is essentially a closed-source session involving a discussion between the honorable prime minister of India and the CEOs and the top executives from the global tech giants. We are expecting a large number of the global tech CEO community to be present at the AI summit which would be participating in it.

Mr. Allen: Are you – are you able to name any names at this stage?

Amb. Kwatra: I think there are more names coming through, so you would see the full display of the names there. But we are hoping and expecting that the people who actually lead the AI technology world, not just in terms of the industry CEOs, et cetera, but also those leaders who think about AI, who think about research in AI, who think about how this research could lead to new dimensions of AI, going forward, not just in terms of application but, perhaps, new mathematical models that might emerge.

So there is a spectrum of tech leadership which goes beyond CEOs in that sense, which would get captured at the – at this roundtable. Naturally, there will be Indian CEOs also, Indian thinking also, talking about how our own indigenous models are shaping out.

We might see a launch of a couple of them during the summit. That also remains in work. And then, of course, is the leaders declaration, or, I would say, the summit declaration which will – which will come out of the summit.

That declaration is in works and we are hoping it will be good, comprehensive declaration which will capture the four things I mentioned right in the beginning, which is the people, progress, and planet, and the impact, and how then impact threads through people, progress, and planet, and comes out in the form of declaration.

Mr. Allen: Mm hmm. So one of the major outcomes for France's domestic perspective at the summit was catalyzing a lot of investment in France's technology and AI sector. At least from the outside, it appeared that the summit was an important driver of these outcomes.

I'm just curious if that's your perception as well. How important was the summit itself in catalyzing investment, and what impact are you seeing from those commitments that were announced at the summit last year?

Amb. Bili: It's – definitely, it was a very powerful catalyst. We had something like 109 billion (dollars) private investment promises.

Mr. Allen: A high return on investment for the cost of the summit, I think.  
(Laughs.)

Amb. Bili: Yes, it was, and I know some of you have seen a chart recently, but I think on foreign direct investment on AI France was really having a big part of the project on the pipeline. So it's it was an interesting thing. And it's not only on the power plants, but it's also a lot about research, computing infrastructure, and large-scale data. So it has been good. And also it helps to foster EU Commission attention. And so at the same moment, or in the week after, the EU Commission announced 200 billion in investment across Europe. So I think we were also pushing Europe in that – in that same – in that same direction. So, in that sense, it has been quite a success.

And I think we are really moving forward, deploying rapidly this infrastructure, and also it helps us to support new talents. We had a lot of good engineers – not to compete with India, of course, but still we have a lot of praise for our engineers from the tech sector here in the U.S. And also prove that the pool of talent financing, we have a very thriving startup community with more than 2,000 startup in the AI domain. So I feel quite confident about all things are going – looking forward and doing after the Impact Summit.

Mr. Allen: And, Ambassador Kwatra, we've also seen echoes of that French experience in terms of major announcements of investments. More than \$10 billion from at least three companies. Microsoft, Google, and Amazon have each announced investments of more than \$10 billion in India and AI projects. So how do these investments strengthen India's AI ecosystem and long-term capacity? And what are you looking to get out of them? Obviously, it's a very exciting number, but what does that actually translate to in terms of capabilities, prosperity, economic growth, et cetera?

Amb. Kwatra: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I would say, if you look at the foreign partnerships that India is building in this AI space, these investments are positioned in that context. But if you actually look at how it, essentially, networks into the aspects of AI that India is working on, you will then begin to see specificity there. So India, for example, today is working on all five layers of the artificial intelligence, which is starting at the base layer of energy, go to infra, compute, model development, and then, of course, its deployment and adoption to scale.

Each of these investments that you refer to – these partnership investments that you refer to, there would, of course, be a corresponding Indian partner also – would begin to fit itself into one of these five layers. More right now centered on infra and compute, but you could also see potentially partnerships – if not direct partnerships, even indirect partnerships in terms of building of models. And naturally, when it comes to the deployment, adoption, and diffusion to scale, through multiple applications that will get developed, I think that's where you would see a burst of development happening in India, and then radiating outwards to the other countries in terms of larger adoption and diffusion.

We do believe firmly that when it comes to application, adoption, and diffusion, India would perhaps be among the most significant geographies in the world. Which will also allow AI technology to broad base itself across the spread of 1.4 billion people. And that was the essence of democratization. So when we talk of these investments, they are very, very material for, naturally, not just one of the – one of those five layers of AI, but also in us to be able to build these partnerships with the technological community in the world outside.

Mr. Allen: And if I could ask you to sort of elaborate on the Indian pitch. When you're, sort of, trying to attract companies to invest in India, one could make the argument that it's the internet. It's almost inherently global. Why do you need to put the investment in India? You could, theoretically, serve it from the United States. You could, theoretically, serve it from France, or from the UAE. But obviously these companies are not stupid. So they chose to invest in India. And what do you think it was that made it such an attractive place to put down tens of billions of dollars' worth of investment?

Amb. Kwatra: Yeah. I think it would be little difficult for me to define the technical parameters of how this particular technology works. I think a lot of it has got to do with that also. But I think the – if you look at the trend of technology partnerships that India and the U.S. have forged, and the Indian companies and the U.S. companies have forged, you will see that these investments are always positioned in a manner that are beneficial to both the partners, and in this case, of course, the entities involved. We believe that these investments, which you referred to – and I think they are significantly larger sums than this – would essentially begin to fit into the infrastructure and the compute space within India, which then leads to the – naturally, the development of cloud compute, inference windows, which are available – context windows, which are available for delivery of inference of the AI models.

Yes, you know, part of it can always be delivered remotely. But I think there are parts of AI technology, the way it is evolving, that there is a – there is an inherent benefit for the companies to position themselves in the geographies, particularly those geographies like India which have a very good low demand base of energy to provide for this infrastructure and new compute, and more importantly will be able to build on them and deploy – build and deploy in a manner that is beneficial for this partnership.

Mr. Allen: And one thing that you touched on, that I think is extremely important, is the energy part of this equation. And as I look at India's achievements over the past 10 years, one place where it really stands out is speed of new energy construction. And for many of these organizations, the rate limiting factor in how much computing capacity they can deploy is how fast they can get access to energy. The term of art in the U.S. policy community is speed to power. And I think what India has proven over the past five years is they can add a lot of new electrical generation capability faster than many countries around the world. Do you suspect that that is an advantage that companies find attractive about India?

Amb. Kwatra: That is definitely, you know, one of the capacities – unique capacities that India has built over the years, over the last 10 years particularly after the government of Prime Minister Modi came in. That is a strength. And the strength we are hoping to increase and build on further. To the extent that that is a unique advantage in the AI layers, yes, that helps. But as I said, it is much more than that. And there are larger aspects of the development, adoption, and diffusion of AI which are also useful to the partner. But, yes, energy layer, as I alluded to earlier, is a good capacity that we can provide to our partners.

Mr. Allen: Mmm hmm. So one of the things that Mr. Ambassador mentioned a moment ago was the French startup ecosystem as really flourishing in a way that, forgive me, was not true 10 years ago, was not true 20 years ago. And I think India stands out as one of the few Global South countries that can legitimately claim to have a vibrant venture capital ecosystem and a vibrant startup ecosystem. So what are you thinking for the role of startups, both in India's AI policy, writ large, and also for any role in the Impact Summit?

Amb. Kwatra: You see, if I recall correctly the words of, I think it was the French special envoy for AI, Ms. Anne Bouverot, I think, who described 2026 as the year of French-Indian innovation, in many ways. But innovation ecosystem in India currently, across the technology sphere – and AI I only put as one aspect of the technology; it's not the entirety of technology – is thriving, is absolutely thriving. There are thousands and

thousands of startups, large number of unicorns, from two-member – two-company officials startup to fairly substantial personal-based unicorns. Highly successful, motivated, driven.

But one central aspect which actually drives this innovation spread and intensity in India is that society – Indian society is at ease in adopting technology and diffusing it to scale. When India established its own ad hoc, unique identification system and a unique payments system – the UPI, Unified Payment Interface system – we saw it applied that today you have the unique identity system and the payments system available to 1.4 billion people of India at scale at effectively no cost or pretty much a zero-cost basis. That shows you how technology responds to – how society responds to the technology when it comes to receptivity towards it, adopting it, and then diffusing it to all the 1.4 billion. And I think that’s what is one of the major factors that is driving this huge spurt of innovation among the massive STEM talent base and the youth of India that’s there.

Mr. Allen: Yeah.

So we’ve been putting this event together for a couple of months now, and when we originally talked about the concept for this panel we didn’t anticipate this breaking news. So, with apologies to the ambassadors, I’m going to ask you, we just saw a landmark India-European Union trade announcement, and I want – if I could get your opinions on the extent to which AI is going to be a part of the story of European-Indian trade in the future – with this agreement in particular, I mean.

Amb. Kwatra: Yeah. Well, India-EU FTA has been under discussion for now about last 18-plus years, so –

Mr. Allen: Congratulations! (Laughter.) (Inaudible.) (Laughter.)

Amb. Kwatra: No, but – but you know, you can – you can look at it in multiple ways. But I think one key aspect to look at would be the comprehensive nature of the India-EU FTA. It is spread across several chapters, which are, naturally, legally binding aspects of it. It is comprehensive in a sense that it include trade in goods. I may not be very specifically informed about it, but could be trade in services also; naturally, investments; and technology.

So technology, whether as a product or as a service, is intrinsically a part of it. And trade in services will include all the four modes that you have in the WTO – mode one, two, three, four – in terms of establishment of businesses, movement of professionals.

So I would imagine technology would very much be a part of India-U.S. growth in economic ties. FTA is definitely an enabler for that. I say this because the way societies are evolving technology will play increasingly far more consequential role than it already does in building of new products, in delivery of new services, and generation of – you know, evolving of new industry. So you have physical AI now being talked about, which is not just simple robotics; which is entire manufacturing component supply chains of physical AI. How exactly will those be placed? So there are new aspects of I won't say economy, but definitely new aspects of industrial economy that – those are evolving.

Those will very much be part of India-EU economic and trade partnership. And I'm not seeing the specific, but I'm only assuming that India-EU FTA would be a great enabler for those.

Mr. Allen: Terrific.

Ambassador Bili, can I get your thoughts?

Amb. Bili: Well – (inaudible) – good news. And I think we can make a link with that concept of era of innovation between France and India, because it's really about EU and India reinforcing their tie, of course in economic but also in technological and scientific operation, and just to have a two-way bridge to make our countries stronger or all countries stronger together. And so I think it's very good news for us.

Mr. Allen: Yes. And for those of you in the audience who didn't hear the ambassador's quiet remark, he pointed at me and said thanks to you as to why this agreement was –

Amb. Kwatra: He did say that.

Mr. Allen: – finally concluded after 18 years. So, yes, the U.S. playing an important role in bringing India and Europe together, I suppose. (Laughter.)

So I want to now connect the dots on so many of the different things that we've talked about here. There is the summit itself, which is an exceptional spectacle. You've got this very fast-moving technology. And one of the things that these summits have done, I think they've proven the ability to do this, is to really set the global narrative for AI for the subsequent year. After the Bletchley Park Summit, we were constantly talking about AI safety for those next six months. After the Seoul AI Summit in Korea we were really focusing on what companies could do and what commitments they could make. And then with the Paris AI

Action Summit, I think it's fair to say there was a shift towards more of an optimistic tone and a pragmatism in thinking about AI adoption.

So we've heard the government side of the story in India from some of the major initiatives that you have underway to promote the use of AI, to make sure that investments in AI are well capitalized. But I do want to bring us back to the spirit of the original AI Summit, which was around safety and thinking about governance and, where appropriate, regulation. I think those of us in the AI community might not know, but India actually has a pretty sophisticated opinion on AI regulation, and what the appropriate balance is in trying to think about these things. And so I wanted to ask, you know, number one is could you share with our audience your sense of India's approach to AI regulation? And then, secondarily, to the extent that this is going to be a factor in the India AI Summit, you know, what are you looking for in the governance conversation? Is that going to appear in the ministerial declaration, for example?

Amb. Kwatra:

Yeah. I think it's – what you said is absolutely correct, that when the first summit happened safety and safety of AI was quite central. Which it still is. But probably the definitional aspect of safety has expanded to include several other aspects also. It is in the very nature of AI as a technology that these conversations would continue to evolve and grow, I would say even deepen, in specific aspects of AI. So as you observe, we have a fairly pragmatic and balanced view of – I wouldn't say regulation, but governance of AI, and how it fits into the society. Which is that it should be of a manner that encourages innovation, which is central to its growth, to its incorporation in the society. Two, at the same time, it also ensures that the developed product is safe, not just in the product itself but also its use, which is a separate set of governance aspects.

So we have tried very hard, and I'm sure it will be a continuous feature, to strike a pragmatic balance between safety, naturally, of AI, but at the same time ensuring that it doesn't stifle innovation in a manner that the innovation and the companies that want to innovate, the companies that want to put capital into its innovation, the young, youthful talent that wants to build on it and innovate on its application, is able to do it unconstrained, fully showed in its confidence that government will ensure that its usage, its deployment is safe for the society.

Mr. Allen:

Great. And I think we were having a conversation downstairs before the panel had begun. And I just want to emphasize how privileged we are today to have these two gentlemen, who really could not be more perfect in so many ways that I didn't even know when we began. For example, Ambassador Kwatra, of course, was previously the

ambassador to France, and so has that sort of unique relationship. And it wouldn't surprise me at all if after this panel you find out that your next stint is going to be the ambassador to India, who knows?  
(Laughter.)

Amb. Bili: I'd love it (Laughter).

Mr. Allen: Now there is another way in which this is the perfect, true group of gentlemen, which you all did not hear. But downstairs I was astonished to hear Ambassador Kwatra speak completely fluidly and comfortably about things like cost per token when delivering AI capabilities, which – I'm what passes for an old-timer in the field of AI policy, because I've been doing this for 10 years now. And I promise you, 10 years ago there was not a diplomat in the world who could have said "cost per token." So two very remarkable gentleman who we're privileged to be with here today as we continue the conversation around the India AI Impact Summit and everything ahead.

So, at this stage, I believe we're going to move to a coffee break. So outside there's refreshments which everyone can enjoy, and then we'll – oh, sorry, Sadie's correcting me here. The next stage is –

Sadie  
McCullough:  
Mr. Allen:

Ajay.

Oh, he actually came through. OK. So just – I have to actually share with the audience here some really exciting news. The principal scientific advisor of India has been called into some very important discussions, and we were just wondering as early as this morning whether or not he was going to be able to make it today. But we're incredibly privileged that, in fact, he is going to be able to join us remotely from New Delhi. And so at this stage we can turn it over to him. I believe he's on the screen now.

So please join me in thanking our two ambassadors and join me in welcoming PSA Sood. (Applause.)

(END.)