

## **AI Decrypted:** A Guide for Navigating Al Developments in 2024



# Today's AI global landscape is complicated and volatile.

Last year will be remembered as the year Artificial Intelligence (AI) became a household word and a front-burner political issue. Spurred by the massmarket impact of ChatGPT and an upwelling of concern about AI risks, governments broke new ground on frameworks for AI governance, including regulation of "frontier" AI.

Maintaining this same degree of political and policy momentum on AI governance in 2024 will be difficult. While major governments have largely aligned on the broad outlines of AI policy through venues such as the G7, they are taking different approaches to making it a reality. Tough debates loom on questions including the risks and benefits of open-source AI and whether China will play a constructive role in the emerging global framework for AI safety. Policymakers will need to pivot from developing governance frameworks to the significant challenge of ensuring effective implementation of regulations in practice.

The convergence of technological developments and political uncertainty will present new business opportunities, regulatory risks, and the occasional crisis.

As businesses aim to navigate the AI landscape in 2024, we have outlined the 10 emerging trends and challenges that will define the future of AI.



### Industry incumbents will face heightened global competition

SUMMARY

U.S. technology companies will continue to dominate the Al technology stack, but 2024 will see the emergence of new global players.

## U.S.-China discussions on AI governance will make limited progress

Bilateral discussions between the U.S. and China on Al issues made little progress in 2023, but there are some hopeful signs of engagement between the world's leading Al superpowers this year.

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#### The EU's AI governance ambitions collide with reality

The EU finally reached a political agreement on the AI Act in December 2023, but now comes the hard part: *implementing it.* 

# 04

### Keeping up global momentum on frontier Al governance will prove challenging

The "Bletchley Park Declaration" showed that countries agree on the basic principles of AI safety, but what comes next?

## 05

## National security concerns will trump existential risks (x-risk)

Existential risk debates took up a lot of airtime in 2023, with a wide range of stakeholders warning of the risks that AI posed to humanity.

6 Open-source AI in the political crosshairs "Open vs. closed AI models"—this will be the hot button issue of 2024.

## 07

## Government-backed "national compute" efforts gain steam

As the amount of computing power needed to be at the cutting edge of AI development has increased, a number of countries have begun to consider developing publicly financed compute clusters.

# 08

#### **Global South vies for more influence in AI debates**

Despite some progress at the UK AI Safety Summit, Global South countries have largely been absent from important global policy conversations about AI governance.

#### Political hurdles to digital trade and data flows

In 2024, AI, training datasets, copyright, and other data-related issues will be key areas of focus for governments.

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### Al will draw scrutiny in new and unexpected sectors, putting new regulators in the mix

As discussions around AI governance pick up, there are likely to be more calls from new actors to monitor and regulate the technology.

#### 1) INDUSTRY LEADERS WILL FACE HEIGHTENED GLOBAL COMPETITION

Figure 1: Most Important Global Players Across the AI Tech Stack

#### Top Companies (Globally)



\*Calculations about the most important players differ by services and business models. For the purpose of this report, we have collated across different lists.

The boardroom drama at OpenAI underscored how important access to massive amounts of capital and hyperscale cloud infrastructure have become for cutting-edge AI innovation. The winners from this trend, including U.S. developers like OpenAI and hyperscalers like Google, AWS, and Microsoft, will build on their leading positions in AI research, development of specialized AI chips, and other parts of the emerging AI ecosystem this year. However, 2024 will also see the emergence of new competition – sometimes from unexpected quarters. This will complicate discussions about global AI governance.

### Trends & Challenges

*Trend:* Propelled in part by the availability of powerful open-source AI models, AI startups from countries like Israel, the Middle East, and Europe will continue to build momentum this year. The likes of Mistral (France) and G42 (United Arab Emirates) will increasingly offer alternatives to established industry players. As companies and countries ramp up the availability of large-scale computing power, it will spur innovation but may drive new concerns about privacy and safety.

*Trend:* There is likely to be a major shakeout in China's AI ecosystem after a frenzy of business activity last year. Major players like Alibaba, Baidu, Tencent, and Huawei that already have access to considerable computing power will forge ahead, but industry newcomers like Kai-Fu Lee's 01.AI will be nipping at their heels in an increasingly competitive market for both enterprise and consumer AI applications.

*Challenge:* Securing access to advanced GPUs – the specialized semiconductors that have been powering cutting-edge AI – will be the common challenge facing industry incumbents and upstarts alike. This is particularly true for Chinese companies, which will continue to look for workarounds to U.S. export controls but will affect companies across the world. Startups will vie with industry leaders for access to scarce computing power. While GPU leader Nvidia will continue to be a preferred supplier, rival hardware makers like Intel and AMD, and smaller players in China like Moore Threads and Biren will seek new market share. Limited advanced packaging capacity at key foundries such as TSMC and high demand for the most advanced GPUs means bigger players are likely to retain major advantages. This will increase pressure on governments to build their own, independent computing clusters – and make them accessible to startups.

*Challenge:* 2024 will likewise see the beginnings of an alternative AI development ecosystem emerge in China, as pressure from U.S. semiconductor export controls spurs further investments by the Chinese government and companies to break the country's reliance on the U.S.-centric AI technology stack.

#### 2) U.S.-CHINA DISCUSSIONS ON AI GOVERNANCE WILL MAKE LIMITED PROGRESS

Figure 2: Summary of GPU restrictions caught by U.S. Export Controls



Performance density (Total processing performance/min2)

There were hopeful signs of engagement between the world's leading AI superpowers after both countries signed on to the Bletchley Declaration at the UK AI Safety Summit in November. Beijing and Washington subsequently agreed to hold bilateral discussions on AI in 2024. But when Presidents Biden and Xi met in California in November, a hoped-for statement against the use of AI for command and control of nuclear weapons never materialized. Progress this year may be similarly patchy. Bilateral talks will likely open with tentative discussions about how to regulate frontier AI models, but we expect only slow progress. The next global safety summit, which will be hosted by South Korea later this spring, will be an important signpost for how things will progress between the world's two largest AI superpowers.



#### Trends & Challenges

*Trend:* Look for the Commerce Department to lead bilateral discussions on the U.S. side, and possibly the Ministry of Commerce for China. U.S.-China AI talks will have wider importance, since progress at the global level depends on the Washington and Beijing coordinating on this sensitive and complex issue. Concerns about the use of AI to fuel military advances and ongoing debates in both countries about which government agency should be in the lead on AI governance – or whether a new bureaucracy should be created to grapple with AI – will be among the factors that will complicate the discussion.

*Trend:* Structured talks between American and Chinese academics, think tanks, and business community representatives—known as Track 2 dialogues—will provide a pressure valve for tough conversations taking place in official channels. Several dialogues underway at the end of last year will pick up steam in 2024. Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt – who in 2023 reportedly attempted to launch a Track 2 on AI with the late Henry Kissinger – may attract outsized attention, but other, lower-profile efforts led by universities and trade promotion groups will have a better chance of making meaningful progress.

*Challenge:* At the forefront of any U.S.-China discussions on AI will be the issue of expanding U.S. controls on advanced GPUs for export to China. This issue was underscored in December 2023 when Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo for the first time explicitly linked the U.S. GPU controls to China's ability to develop frontier models. The Commerce Department is likely to tighten controls further in 2024, under pressure from Congress. This could drain the limited reservoir of goodwill built up by recent high-level diplomatic engagement, further limiting progress.

#### **3) THE EU'S AI GOVERNANCE AMBITIONS COLLIDE WITH REALITY**

Figure 3: AI applications falling under different risk classifications in the EU AI Act



In late 2023, after nearly five years of development, the EU finally reached a political agreement on the AI Act, its flagship AI legislation. Now comes the hard part: implementing it. Designing a regulatory bureaucracy at the EU and member state level to understand and enforce this sprawling regulation – which is likely to enter full force in 2026 – will be a monumental challenge. Companies across the AI value chain will have to keep up with developments in Brussels and other European capitals as they brace for the AI "Brussels effect."



### Trends & Challenges

*Trend:* Following the agreement on the final text, formal adoption will likely follow in the spring. The ban on unacceptable uses of AI will take effect six months later. Most of the Act's other provisions will not enter into force for two years. A lot could change in the AI world between now and then, but companies developing and deploying AI algorithms/models and applications will immediately begin preparing to comply with the act's detailed requirements. These will create new compliance costs and the risk of fines of up to 7% of global revenue for violating the act – although like GDPR and the bloc's recently crafted rules for internet platforms, the highest fines will likely be reserved for egregious cases.

*Challenge:* Republicans and Democrats alike in 2024 will be quick to criticize provisions of the EU law that they view as disproportionately affecting U.S. companies. This will lead to transatlantic friction. In addition, it remains unclear how the AI Act will align with other major global efforts to develop governance framework around advanced/frontier AI models. A key question for 2024 will be how to reconcile and align the EU AI Act with other AI governance efforts, including the Bletchley Park Process and the G7 Hiroshima process.

*Challenge:* Rounding up enough technical and regulatory expertise to run a sprawling new EU AI bureaucracy will be the biggest challenge. The act will set up a new European AI Office to oversee the most advanced models, including thresholds for general-purpose AI systems, and to enforce common rules. The EU will also create an independent expert panel to advise on general-purpose AI, including foundation models. An additional AI Board consisting of member state representatives will also have a say on implementation. This new body, in turn, will be assisted by an advisory forum consisting of private sector and civil society stakeholders.

#### 4) KEEPING UP GLOBAL MOMENTUM ON AI GOVERNANCE WILL PROVE CHALLENGING

Figure 4: Countries' regulatory stances are converging around three distinct approaches



#### Source: Air Street Capital, State of AI Report, 2023

After a constructive 2023, global AI diplomacy will face geopolitical headwinds in 2024, complicating efforts to coordinate global oversight. The Bletchley Park Declaration showed countries more or less aligned on basic principles of frontier AI governance, but the question is what comes next. The final UK summit communique contained less detail than an initial draft communique circulated ahead of the meetings, suggesting some of the text – including sections of the draft referring to the OECD and UN – was watered down to gain consensus.

In 2024, election-year pressures will bite in the U.S., UK, and Europe, while the U.S.'s relationship with China remains fraught. These complicating factors, together with differences in the details of how countries intend to regulate AI, will make it challenging to reach a global consensus on next steps. A global treaty or agreement on AI risks and the emergence of a new international agency for AI issues remains years away at best.



# Trends & Challenges

*Trend:* One key aspect of the global discussion will center on how to evaluate and assess compliance with the voluntary cooperation on codes of conduct that companies signed last year. Some 15 leading AI and cloud companies have endorsed the White House Voluntary Commitments. Look for this list to expand in early 2024, including by adding players from other countries, like France's Mistral.

*Challenge:* Some regions and countries are likely to opt out of the push to regulate Al. ASEAN, the bloc of 10 southeast Asian countries, could be an example of a group that will likely push for a more business-friendly approach. Its "guide to Al ethics and governance," which is expected to be finalized at the end of January, will be an important indicator of how the region is trending. While the Bletchley Declaration acknowledged that countries may take different approaches to implementing its ideas, divergence between countries that opt for more restrictive legislation and those that take more of a wait-and-see approach could make it challenging to find a new set of deliverables for upcoming meetings in South Korea and France.

#### 5) NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS WILL TRUMP EXISTENTIAL RISKS

#### Figure 5: AI Concerns Risk Matrix



"Existential risk" dominated the airwaves and social media in 2023, with some tech executives, researchers, and policymakers calling for a halt in AI development and warning that AI posed a risk of human extinction. While the existential risk debate is likely to keep simmering in academic and select industry circles, the U.S. government in 2024 will increasingly focus on more concrete national security threats posed by frontier AI models. This was a central theme of the recent AI Executive Order, which emphasized threats to cybersecurity, biosecurity, and critical infrastructure. Generative AI's potential to supercharge disinformation will also be firmly on policymakers' and politicians' radar as they gird for billions of people around the world to head for the polls this year.



# Trends & Challenges

*Trend:* Al risks are likely to also become more of a boardroom issue in 2024. OpenAl's rift with CEO Sam Altman in late 2023 highlighted how concerns about rapid advances Al capabilities – and the need for massive amounts of capital to deliver them – had created tension with board members who were more focused on the company's non-profit safety mission. This year, a broader array of companies may find themselves grappling with hard-to-answer questions about the direction of Al development and how best to balance the significant commercial opportunities with the potential risks. However, the focus of these conversations will be less on the existential than on more concrete concerns, like the risks of rolling out unpredictable chatbots in consumer-facing applications. For multinationals, the need to develop a view on China's role in frontier model development will also become more salient, as c-suites and boards weigh how best to roll out Al capabilities across their global footprint.

*Challenge:* Bad actors using generative AI to spread disinformation feels like an inevitability in 2024, but we are already living in a challenging information environment. A more interesting question is whether we start to see bad actors using these same systems to augment offensive cyber operations or engage in other rogue behavior – for example, helping to design novel pathogens. If one of these more concrete risks was to materialize, it would drive calls for stricter regulation of frontier AI systems. After all the attention showered on existential risk debate last year, we expect these concerns to fade in policy discussions in 2024.

#### 6) OPEN-SOURCE AI IN THE POLITICAL CROSSHAIRS

The history of our industry highlights how open, standards-based development leveraging the capabilities of the entire industry both accelerate innovation and ensure technology advances have the largest positive impact. By embracing open standards and transparency across all aspects of the rapidly developing AI ecosystem, we can help ensure the transformational benefits of responsible AI are broadly available.

> Lisa Su CEO, AMD

The debate about open vs. closed AI models will intensify in 2024 and could even eclipse the recent discussion about regulation of frontier models as an issue for policymakers and companies. At the heart of the debate is the question about whether "open-source" AI – that is, AI systems where model weights or other key details are made widely available, for other developers to pick up, play around with, and even commercialize – presents a novel security risk. Some in the U.S. national security community who are concerned about proliferation of advanced AI capabilities say yes. They argue that bad actors with access to model weights and other information could use it for bioterrorism, cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, or other harmful activities.

Meanwhile, open-source proponents argue that closed models that only let outsiders access them via a web interface can be just as vulnerable to misuse. They also view policies that favor closed approaches as a smokescreen for giving incumbent companies outsized power over AI development. Battle lines on the issue are forming. In early December 2023, Meta joined with IBM, Intel, Sony Group, Dell, a host of top universities, and a collection of tech startups and foundations to announce an "AI Alliance" dedicated to open-source AI. The recently established Foundation Model Forum backed by OpenAI and Anthropic is likely to be more aligned with the "closed" camp.



*Trend:* Governments in 2024 will develop more nuanced views on the open-source question as they gather more information about the issue. The U.S. may ultimately be more willing to consider increased transparency requirements or restrictions around open-source development than the EU or China, given its greater focus on national security concerns.

*Challenge:* Differences on the open-source question could lead to a rift between the U.S. and EU – where prominent startups such as France's Mistral and Germany's Aleph Alpha are investing heavily in open approaches. The EU, which lacks jurisdiction over national security issues in member states, will be reluctant to tackle the issue head on, while the U.S. may push to include more explicit language on open-source risks in its voluntary commitments language.

*Challenge:* Any evidence that bad actors are leveraging open-source models like Meta's Llama-2 to push disinformation would create pressure for tougher measures. In addition, there will be increasing debate in 2024 over allowing Chinese firms access to leading open-source models created by U.S. firms, with Meta's Llama-2 already being used as the basis for model and application development by some leading Chinese AI startups, for example.

#### 7) GOVERNMENT-BACKED "NATIONAL COMPUTE" EFFORTS GAIN STEAM

Figure 6: Compute usage in AI models, 1950-2020



#### Source: ARK Investment, Open AI

As the amount of computing power needed to be at the cutting edge of Al development has grown in recent years, a number of countries have expressed concern about access to compute. The \$63 million it reportedly cost to train GPT-4, OpenAl's current cutting-edge foundation model, for example, is financially feasible only for a handful of well-funded startups or cloud service providers. With the data and compute-intensity of advanced AI systems likely to grow further with the next generation of advanced models, there is a concern among policymakers, civil society, and the private sector that innovative research could soon be limited only to researchers working inside a handful of small and powerful technology companies.



*Trend:* Different countries have different goals for these publicly financed compute clusters, but these efforts will gain momentum in 2024. The Biden administration and Al-savvy U.S. lawmakers are, for instance, pushing for the creation of a National AI Research Resource, a \$2.6 billion project to make advanced AI compute, data sets, and software tools available to researchers and qualified startups. China is likewise far along with its national compute effort via the National Unified Computing Power Network (NUCPN), while the UK, EU, India, Singapore, and Japan likewise have ambitions for expanding their national compute capacity. How to manage access to a public resource whose demand will almost certainly outstrip supply will be the subject of intense debates.

*Trend:* China will continue its national computing power push, driven by concern about U.S. export controls on advanced AI optimized hardware. Beijing is earmarking investment in GPUs, datacenters, and interconnectivity as part of the NUCPN, which is being overseen by the powerful National Development and Reform Commission.

*Challenge:* The U.S. NAIRR effort has been slow to get off the ground, and the effort in 2024 could face political obstacles – including the need to obtain authorization and funding from Congress in election year when lawmakers are likely to be sensitive to big spending.

*Challenge:* While it is relatively easy to see the research case for the NAIRR and similar initiatives, it is not yet clear whether nationally available compute resources available at reasonable cost will enable smaller startups to compete with larger, better-funded technology players. A NAIRR pilot project due to launch early in 2024 will be an important test bed for the concept, both within the U.S. and globally.

#### 8) GLOBAL SOUTH VIES FOR MORE INFLUENCE IN AI DEBATES

Despite some progress at the UK AI Safety Summit, Global South Countries, to date, have been largely absent from the most important global policy conversations about AI governance. In 2024, countries in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia will look for new ways to contribute meaningfully to a debate that has been led predominantly by western industrial nations and major AI companies.

There is, however, no playbook for how Global South countries *should* engage on international AI governance efforts. Gaining agreement among smaller economies on broader governance initiatives may be challenging, with many Global South countries likely to be more focused on access to digital services that can drive economic growth than on setting up detailed regulatory requirements for foundation models. Countries like Singapore, India, and the UAE have, for example, made it clear that investments into AI will be the national priority for their governments in 2024.

As Global South governments look to deepen their participation in governance discussions, more advanced economies will try to be seen as agenda-setting leaders. China has already laid down a marker with its Global AI Governance Initiative, released in October 2023 at the Belt and Road Forum. The initiative seeks to position China as a supporter of the preferences of the Global South on AI governance. It also took a critical view of efforts to constrain the supply of technology key to development AI, aimed at U.S. export controls.

# Trends & Challenges

*Trend:* India will compete with China for Global South leadership on AI issues. Its chairmanship of GPAI in 2024 marks a major change for India's participation in international fora on AI. This could align Delhi more with the U.S. and western countries, and potential in opposition to China in this domain. China, meanwhile, will attempt to gain adherents to its vision of AI leadership through the BRICS study group and other initiatives that build on the Global AI Governance Initiative.

*Challenge:* Policymakers' capacity to convene discussions on AI issues is likely to remain a hurdle to deeper engagement in the Global South. Staffing delegations for Bletchley Park last year was a major challenge for some countries. There also are few well developed and resourced mechanisms for dialogue that include Global South perspectives.

*Challenge:* Countries in the Global South are also likely to face major challenges deploying AI in 2024. Among those vying for a major role in representing developing countries, only China and arguably India have major technology platforms that are significant global players in the sector. As governments work to build up their own capacity on AI policy, they will also be seeking new ways to incentivize companies to invest in AI inside their borders.

#### 9) POLITICAL HURDLES TO DIGITAL TRADE AND DATA FLOWS

The issue of how and where to regulate AI is also tied up with issues around data security, data privacy, data localization, and cross border data flows. While countries like the EU, China, and India have clear data frameworks in place, the U.S. still lacks a national data law. The result is a patchwork of state laws that create challenges for business compliance. The trend of state-level regulation creating a complicated mess of rules is likely to spill over into the AI arena in 2024. Some U.S. states will choose not to wait for comprehensive national AI regulation before passing their own. California has already taken this step with draft AI privacy rules in late 2023, building on previous efforts to mirror elements of the GDPR in state-level data privacy rules.

In 2024, AI training datasets, copyright, and other data-related issues will be a key area of focus for governments. Discussions around the inclusion of AI-related provisions in trade agreements will accelerate in 2024. A key question is whether governments can agree on policies that avoid restrictions on cross-border data flows that could slow AI development.

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*Trend:* Other governments will be watching how the EU coordinates enforcement of data protection and the new AI Act. The European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS), an office set up to help enforce the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), is also set to play a key role in governing how EU institutions themselves use AI under the act. Ensuring that the EDPS and other key EU agencies have the resources and technical capacity they need to do their jobs will be important for making the legislation work in practice. China also appears to be well positioned to make progress on AI and data issues this year. One law currently under development would include language about protecting user data, particularly in the context of generative AI models.

*Trend:* Most jurisdictions with major AI players, including the U.S., EU, and China, will also pay more attention in 2024 to cross border flow of AI training datasets, driven by national security concerns as well as data privacy issues. The U.S. AI Executive Order, for example, calls for consideration of the national security implications of using U.S.-government data on pathogens and genomics studies for AI training.

*Challenge:* We remain skeptical that this will finally be the year that the U.S. passes meaningful national data protection legislation. Without it, the U.S. have to work harder to gain consensus on AI-related data discussions among allies via the G7, Quad, and U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC).

*Challenge:* In 2024 there will be increasing focus on new applications for admittance to multilateral trade agreements like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and regional for a such as the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA). China and Taiwan, for example, have applied to join CP-TPP, which the UK joined last year. China will likewise work in 2024 to advance technical consultations for joining DEPA. The U.S., meanwhile, has left the playing field. In 2023, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative withdrew longstanding proposals intended to shore up global data flows from consideration at the World Trade Organization. The move showed how data and trade issues remain toxic in the current domestic U.S. political environment. In 2024, we expect to see AI-related data issues to be increasingly on the agenda in global trade fora, but progress on avoiding data policy fragmentation will be difficult without U.S. leadership.

#### **10) AI WILL DRAW SCRUTINY IN NEW AND UNEXPECTED SECTORS, PUTTING NEW REGULATORS IN THE MIX**

As discussions around AI governance pick up in 2024, there are likely to be more calls for monitoring and regulation coming from new quarters. This will include some sector regulators that have not previously been heavily involved in the topic.

For example, in late in 2023 U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chairman Gary Gensler signaled that his agency was "ramping up on Al issues." Gensler noted that although SEC was "not specifically called out" in the Al executive order issued on October 30, the agency had been following Al issues for a long time. He said the agency was interested in both "micro" and "macro" Al policy issues – ranging from financial stability to fraudulent claims about companies' Al capabilities. Similarly, other U.S. federal agencies like the FTC are also gearing up 2024 to regulate Al issues under their purview.

The upcoming U.S. presidential election will also cast a long shadow over AI policy in 2024. A second Trump administration could have major effects on how U.S. sector regulators view AI issues, and on engagement on technology policy between the U.S. and key allies.





*Trend:* Al safety groups and some of the bigger players in industry will continue to call for new approaches to Al governance in 2024. This could include a more fulsome debate about the merits of more centralized regulation of AI, including through a potential new agency, and the more decentralized approach currently favored by the U.S., UK, and Japan.

*Trend:* The AI Executive Order signed by President Biden in late October has mobilized the entire U.S. federal government on AI. Regulators in other countries will also be watching for signs of AI's impact as commercial applications are rolled out in a growing array of sectors and business contexts. While U.S. government agencies are likely to face serious hurdles deadlines for completing the Executive Order's ambitious to-do list, they will also face political pressure from the White House to deliver on the president's agenda – including potentially by bringing more enforcement cases against companies engaged in questionable behavior around AI.

*Challenge:* With governments staffing up with AI experts, and deep technical expertise still in high demand across the AI sector and associated industries, the fight for AI talent will intensify in 2024. Shortages of qualified personnel will limit the capacity of regulators and understand where technology is headed.

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#### CONTACT



Paul Triolo Associate Partner Technology Policy and Strategy Group <u>ptriolo@albrightstonebridge.com</u>

ABOUT US



Anarkalee Perera Director Technology Policy and Strategy Group <u>aperera@albrightstonebridge.com</u>



Kevin Allison Senior Advisor Technology Policy and Strategy Group <u>kallison@albrightstonebridge.com</u>