CONCIERTO | SOVEREIGN INTELLIGENCE

Sovereign Perspectives · Sovereign Strategy

A Nation of Composers

Composers of Visions, Strategies, and Outcomes, Not Consumers of Them

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Executive Summary

The promise of artificial intelligence is that anyone can create with it. The reality, so far, is that few can. Access concentrates where the infrastructure, the skills, and the capital already sit, and the gap is wide: on the leading readiness index, one region averages a score of 32.7 against global leaders above 80. A nation that rents its intelligence inherits that concentration and rations creation to those who can pay. A nation that owns its intelligence can do the opposite, and turn a society of consumers into a nation of composers, people who compose visions, innovations, strategies, and outcomes rather than merely consume them, which is the largest prize sovereignty offers. Oxford Insights, Government AI Readiness Index 2024 (188 countries): sub-Saharan Africa regional average 32.7; upper-middle-income average 43.7; global leaders above 80. Referenced by bodies including UNESCO and the G20.

In Brief

- Access to intelligence is concentrated, and the readiness gap between wealthy and developing nations is wide and, on current trends, widening.
- Rented, consumption-priced AI rations creation to the few who clear the meter, reproducing the global divide inside every country that adopts it.
- Ownership lets a nation extend intelligence broadly, treating access as industrial policy rather than a privilege of budget.
- Distributed creation compounds: a nation of composers surfaces uses no central planner would predict, and the intelligence improves as more of the nation uses it.
- The nations that democratize owned intelligence build a broad base of composers; the nations that ration rented intelligence spend the decade as consumers.

The question is not whether a nation can use AI. It is how many of its people are allowed to create with it, and who decides.



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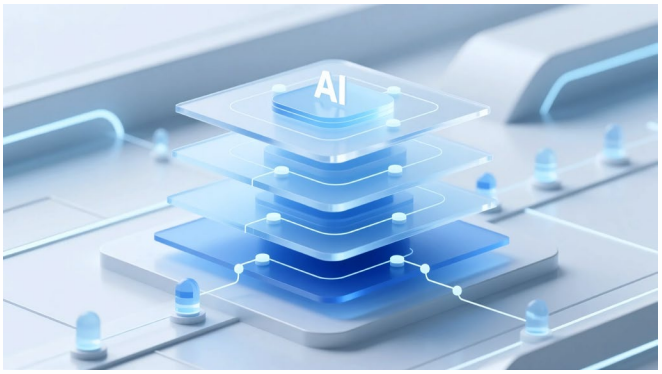
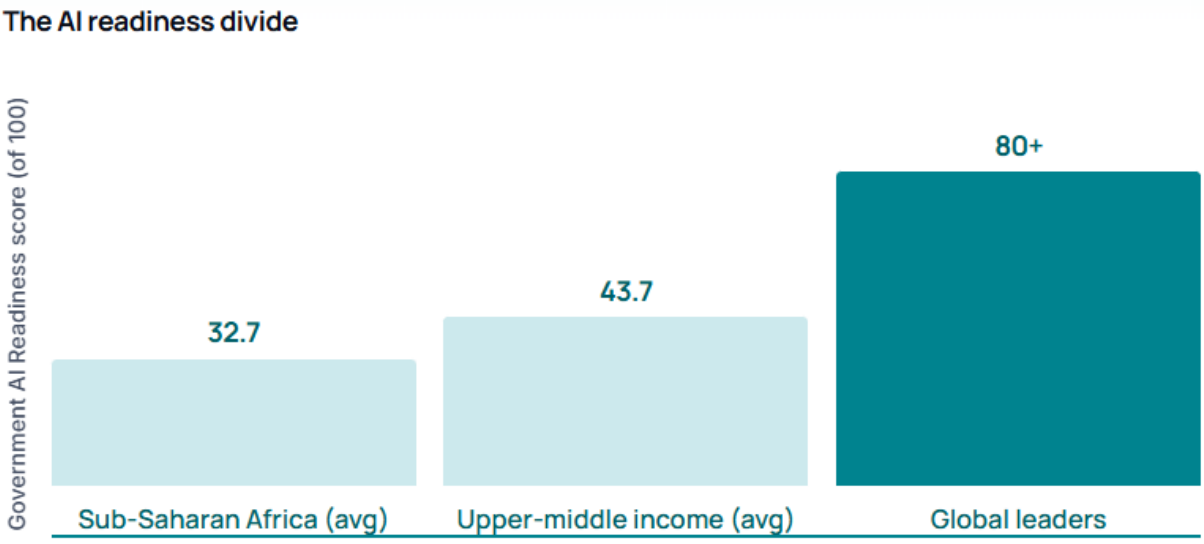
1. The Access Gap



The most capable intelligence on earth is available almost everywhere, and yet the ability to build with it is not. The Government AI Readiness Index, which assesses 188 countries and is used as a benchmark by bodies including UNESCO and the G20, shows a wide and persistent divide: sub-Saharan Africa averages a readiness score of 32.7 and upper-middle-income countries 43.7, while the global leaders sit above 80. The distance between them is the distance between a people who can create with intelligence and a people who can only consume it.

Access to the most capable intelligence is nearly universal. The ability to create with it is not, and that gap is the one that decides futures.



Regional and income-group averages; global leaders exceed 80. The gap is the argument for democratizing access. Source: Oxford Insights, Government AI Readiness Index 2024 (188 countries).

Figure 1. The AI readiness divide. Source: Oxford Insights, Government AI Readiness Index 2024.

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2. Rationing Creation

Consumption pricing reproduces the global divide inside every nation that adopts it. When intelligence is billed by use, access is granted to the users whose output justifies the cost and withheld from everyone else. The result is a small tier of empowered creators and a large majority of onlookers, the same shape the world shows across nations, repeated within each one. It is rationing by budget rather than by talent, and it decides, quietly, who gets to build with the defining capability of the age.

> **"Technology that will shape the future of humanity must be shaped by all of humanity."**
>
> António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations · 2026.

A nation that accepts this model accepts that most of its people will watch the intelligence age rather than shape it. The world's own institutions have warned that computing power, expertise, and investment remain concentrated, and that the digital divide must not be allowed to harden into an AI divide. Left to the rented model, it will, because rented access follows the money, and the money is already concentrated.

3. From Consumers to Composers

Ownership removes the meter that does the rationing. When a nation owns its intelligence, it can extend access as widely as it chooses, because using more of an owned capability does not multiply a foreign bill. The teacher, the student, the small-business owner, the civil servant, and the researcher each gain the ability to direct intelligence toward their own work, and a society of users becomes a society of composers.

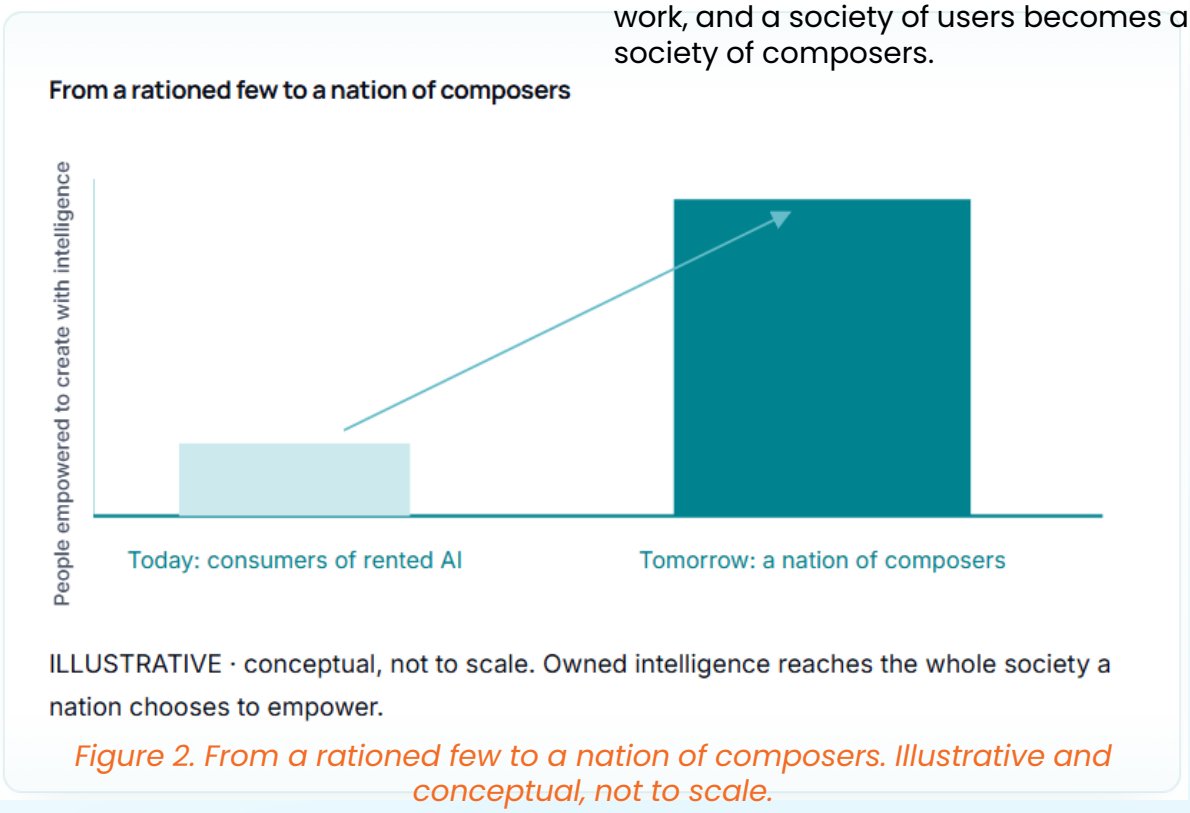

Figure 2. From a rationed few to a nation of composers. Illustrative and conceptual, not to scale.

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A composer is not a lone author. A composer arranges many parts into a coherent whole, a vision, a strategy, an outcome, and increasingly does so by directing a team of intelligent agents. Composition is therefore a team act, one person conducting many hands, and owned intelligence is what lets a nation field those teams at scale rather than reserve them for a few.

Rented, intelligence lets a few produce more. Owned, it lets a nation create, because using it more no longer means paying more.

4. Why a Nation of Composers Compounds

Broad creation is not only fairer; it is more productive, and the reason is specific. A capability held by a narrow tier produces the uses that tier can imagine. The same capability in the hands of a whole population produces the uses no central planner would ever predict: in local languages, local industries, and local problems that only the people living them can see. Creation distributed across a society surfaces a far larger space of possibility than creation rationed to a few, and each new use becomes a starting point for the next.

The compounding runs deeper still, because owned intelligence improves as the nation uses it. A narrow tier teaches the model a narrow slice of the nation's life. A whole population grounds it in the nation's full reality, so the capability itself grows richer the more widely it is shared. Rationing does not merely exclude people from creating; it starves the intelligence of the very breadth that would make it more capable.

The economics make the widening automatic. Because an owned capability costs the same whether ten thousand people use it or a hundred thousand, while a rented one charges for every additional user and raises the charge each year, the same budget reaches more composers every year than the metered alternative would have allowed. The base of creation therefore grows on its own, without a new decision, purely because the cost does not rise with reach. And as each composer learns to direct a team of agents, one person conducts the work of many, so the nation's creative capacity compounds twice over, in the number of composers and in what each of them can compose.

A few creators produce the ideas a few can imagine. A nation of composers produces the ones no one could have planned, and teaches the intelligence the whole of the nation's life.



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5. This Will Worsen If Nothing Changes

Because creation compounds, the divide does not hold steady; it widens, and the widening feeds itself. A society whose whole population creates pulls ahead, which lets it create faster still, while a society that rations access falls further behind and loses the breadth that would have let it catch up. And some of what is lost cannot be recovered. A generation of students, teachers, and workers denied the medium of creation cannot be handed back the years in which they did not learn to build with it. The cost of waiting is not paid later at the same price; it compounds against the nation that waits.

A divide between those who create and those who consume does not stay still. It widens every year, and a generation excluded from creating does not get those years back.

6. Access as Industrial Policy

Treated seriously, broad access to owned intelligence is industrial policy, not charity. A nation that puts a capable, sovereign intelligence in the hands of its whole workforce is investing in domestic capability the way earlier eras invested in universal literacy, electrification, and public networks. Each extended a foundational capability to everyone, and each paid back in growth no elite-only version could have produced. The task for leaders is to treat creation with intelligence as the next such foundation.

Universal literacy was not generosity; it was the foundation of a modern economy. Universal access to creation is the same decision, one medium later.

Principle	What it means for the nation
Access as a right of capability	The power to create with intelligence reaches the whole society the nation chooses to empower
Ownership before access	Broad access is affordable only when the nation owns the faculty rather than renting it by the use
Grounded in the local	National intelligence reflects the nation's languages, context, and needs, so creation is native
Compounding by design	The more of the nation that creates, the more capable the owned intelligence becomes

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7. The Nation That Chooses to Compose

The foresight is straightforward once the choice is named. The nations that treat intelligence as a rented utility will concentrate its benefits, at home and abroad, and will spend the coming decade as consumers of a capability others own. The nations that own their intelligence and extend it to their people will build something different: a broad base of composers whose work compounds into national capability and whose use makes the intelligence itself more their own.

A nation of composers is not a slogan. It is the measurable outcome of two decisions a government can make, to own the intelligence it runs on and to share it widely. Made together, those decisions turn the most concentrating technology in history into the most democratizing one, and they let a nation compose its own next chapter rather than perform one written elsewhere.

A nation can spend the intelligence age as an audience or as its composers. Ownership and access are the two decisions that choose which.

About This Series

Sovereign Perspectives is a research program on the ownership and governance of intelligence, published by Concierto. Its papers examine the strategic, economic, and institutional questions that artificial intelligence raises for governments and other accountable institutions, and they are written for the leaders making those decisions. The program's aim is to advance the public argument, not to promote a product.

Sources

- Oxford Insights, Government AI Readiness Index 2024. oxfordinsights.com.
- United Nations, remarks by Secretary-General António Guterres on AI and the global divide, 2026. un.org.

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