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Exploring the Application of Artificial Intelligence in Government Oversight: A Case Study of the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)

Lianbing Zhou [1, a]

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[1] School of Political Science and Law, The Open University of China, Beijing 100039, China

[a] anjingdb@163.com

Abstract: In January 2025, the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) was established to utilize artificial intelligence to oversee the operations of the federal government and the conduct of government officials. It identified a series of issues and proposed numerous reform measures, but the reforms failed rapidly due to significant controversy. The success and failure of the DOGE's government oversight and reform efforts offer three important theoretical insights. First, artificial intelligence significantly expands the boundaries of human rationality. Through the application of AI technology, there has been a significant leap in government oversight capabilities, demonstrating immense potential in assisting humans in building high-quality governments. Second, the dilemma of human nature's alienation. The "immoral economic agent attributes" of government officials (rooted in self-interest motives, rent-seeking behavior, or dereliction of duty) lead to a decline in governance effectiveness and foster systemic resistance to technological oversight. Third, the dilemma of institutional resistance and technological limitations. The potential of AI-empowered government supervision is constrained by three obstacles: the institutional monopoly of government administrative power, the "black box" of government formed by the evasion or even resistance of the government and officials to supervision, and the technical limitations of AI itself, such as algorithmic bias and data privacy. Based on this, this paper proposes a five-dimensional practical framework of "technology empowerment, institutional embedding, improvement orientation, consensus observation, and moral cultivation" to provide an effective and feasible path for the deep integration of AI into the government supervision system.

Keywords: U.S. Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE); government oversight; artificial intelligence; theoretical insights; practical pathways

Introduction

Since the Dartmouth Conference in the United States in 1956, artificial intelligence technology has undergone long-term technical accumulation. With the release of ChatGPT at the end of 2022, it achieved a leapfrog breakthrough in functionality and has penetrated various fields of society. [1] It has also been rapidly promoted and applied in the field of government governance, with its mainstream application direction being specific government affairs processes and specific public service scenarios for social entities. [2] However, few have directly applied AI technology to government oversight, and academic research in this area remains limited. This paper selects the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) as its research object because its reform initiatives, the controversies it has sparked, and its impact far exceed those of the few similar initiatives worldwide, such as Shenyang's "Big-Data Government Supervision Project" in China; In similar efforts in the United States from the mid-20th century to the present, compared with reform initiatives such as the Hoover Commission, the Grace Commission, the National Performance Review, the "Presidential Management Agenda," the White House Office of American Innovation, and the "Presidential Management Agenda Vision," the Department of Government Efficiency has been more closely integrated with AI, sparked greater controversy, and had a global impact, making it a typical case study for examining the relationship between AI and government oversight. This paper examines the U.S. Office of Government Efficiency's use of AI to oversee federal government operations and official conduct as a typical case study. It conducts a theoretical analysis of the tensions between technology and rationality, technology and humanity, and technology and institutions arising from

AI-enabled government oversight. Based on a clear understanding of the successes and failures of the Office of Management and Budget's reforms and their theoretical implications, this paper designs a five-dimensional practical path for AI-empowered government oversight, comprising "technological empowerment, institutional embedding, improvement orientation, consensus consideration, and moral cultivation," aiming to achieve the deep integration and synergistic evolution of technological rationality, institutional construction, capability improvement, consensus consideration, and humanistic cultivation.

I. The Government Oversight and Reform Practices of the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency

The U.S. Government Efficiency Department was officially established on January 20, 2025, by the Donald Trump administration. It is not a formal government agency but rather an advisory committee composed of experts from the private sector, with Elon Musk as its primary leader. Overall, the Office of Government Efficiency sought to leverage the powerful computational and data processing capabilities of artificial intelligence to oversee and evaluate the legality, compliance, and rationality of the U.S. federal government's operations. This included comprehensive oversight and inspections targeting long-standing issues such as bureaucratic bloat, inefficiency, bureaucratism, fiscal waste, and official corruption within the federal government. The goal was to improve the quality of government operations; however, the initiative ultimately failed due to intense pressure from various quarters.

(1) Issues Identified Through Oversight

The Department of Government Efficiency fully utilized artificial intelligence technology to conduct comprehensive, efficient, and agile supervision and inspections of the operations of the U.S. federal government and the behavior of government officials, uncovering a large number of issues. Some of these issues were of such severity that they caused widespread concern.

First, there was chaos in fiscal spending. The Government Efficiency Department uncovered extensive fiscal waste and improper or fraudulent fiscal expenditures. Federal government agencies had a large number of unnecessary contracts and lease agreements, leading to significant fiscal waste. For example, an audit of the General Services Administration found that 7,500 federal office leases were unnecessary. [3] An inspection of the U.S. Agency for International Development revealed extensive improper expenditures, with some funds even flowing to terrorist organizations. [4] A significant amount of funds were not used for actual aid but instead flowed into the pockets of related interest groups. The Department of Defense's expenditures have failed to pass audits for seven consecutive years. More shockingly, Musk announced the discovery of large-scale fraud in the U.S. Social Security system—millions of people were illegally claiming the pensions of deceased individuals. Although the U.S. Social Security Administration has questioned the accuracy of this data and provided explanations, [5] it is sufficient to illustrate the extreme chaos in government oversight and management.

Second, the U.S. federal government's bureaucratic system is severely problematic. First, there are unreasonable issues in institutional setup. The Office of Government Efficiency found that there are numerous overlapping and redundant agencies within the federal government, leading to waste of resources and inefficiency. Second, decision-making processes are slow and inefficient. The U.S. federal government has a large bureaucracy with complex hierarchies, leading to bloated government agencies and an extremely complex bureaucratic system. The complexity of the bureaucratic system slows down decision-making processes, and overly complicated administrative procedures hinder the ability to implement effective policies, particularly in emergency situations.

Third, the US federal government suffers from excessive regulation, which leads to corruption. The Department of Government Efficiency found that overlapping functions and redundant agencies inevitably result in excessive regulations and regulatory activities, which stifle market vitality. Excessive regulation not only increases the operating costs of the government, but also imposes unnecessary burdens on businesses and citizens. Additionally, excessive regulation inevitably creates opportunities for rent-seeking. The Department of Government Efficiency found that there is an open

"quid pro quo" phenomenon at the upper levels of the U.S. government, where businesses obtain contracts by bribing government agencies or lawmakers or providing kickbacks. Musk announced, "There are too many regulatory rules in the U.S., and the Department of Government Efficiency will act as a 'garbage collector' to handle those unreasonable regulations." [6]

(2) Reform Measures and Results

The Department of Government Efficiency implemented a series of radical reform measures based on issues identified during its oversight and review of the U.S. federal government. In summary, the first measure involved directly halting a large number of federal spending programs, canceling numerous federal contracts, and reducing budgets across multiple departments. The second measure involved swiftly implementing large-scale layoffs within the federal government. The third measure involved directly shutting down government agencies such as the Agency for International Development (USAID) and other social institutions operated with federal funding. The oversight and reforms carried out by the Department of Government Efficiency have contributed to addressing bureaucracy, institutional bloat, fiscal waste, and fiscal fraud and corruption in government operations. These efforts are morally defensible and even occupy the moral high ground.

However, the oversight and reforms of the Department of Government Efficiency, due to their radical nature, have sparked strong backlash. Political figures such as the American Federation of Government Employees, the State and Local Government Employees Union, Democratic lawmakers, attorneys general from as many as 19 states, and certain federal government agencies such as the Department of Defense have opposed and resisted the oversight and reforms of the Department of Government Efficiency through political, judicial, and public opinion channels. Faced with significant controversy and pressure from all sides, Musk, the key figure behind the Department of Government Efficiency, resigned from his position on the evening of May 28, 2025, [7] formally stepping down as head of the department. This marked the substantive end of the Department of Government Efficiency, which had been in existence for less than six months, signaling the failure of the reform and leaving the department in name only.

(3) The Significance of Studying the Government Efficiency Department's Government Oversight and Reform Efforts

Although the Government Efficiency Department's government oversight and reform efforts were effectively implemented for less than half a year before fading into obscurity and failure, three points warrant close attention from the public administration academic community. First, the department achieved highly significant results by employing artificial intelligence to oversee government operations and official conduct. Second, in the United States, a country purportedly characterized by institutionally sound rule of law, the issues within government operations were shockingly severe. Third, the Ministry of Government Efficiency, which held the moral high ground, failed within less than six months, revealing the powerful resistance to reform from a complex political environment, including vested interests. Although the Ministry of Government Efficiency was short-lived, it is worth serious study and analysis. It can provide us with numerous theoretical and practical insights into government supervision and governance, deepen our theoretical understanding of the technical advantages of artificial intelligence in government supervision, the relationship between technology and humanity, and the limitations of technology, and offer valuable references for future practical pathways.

In the digital age, public administration has seen the emergence of agile governance theory and practice, which emphasizes the use of artificial intelligence technology to achieve governance characterized by rapidity, precision, adaptability, and flexibility. In the concept of agile governance, artificial intelligence is mainly used within the government for automatic decision-making, business office work, and interdepartmental coordination; outside the government, it is mainly used for government affairs consultation, automatic approval, and specific public service scenarios. [8] The government supervision and reform activities of the Ministry of Government Efficiency can be classified as agile governance, but they are a new application of agile governance in the internal government scenario—aimed at government supervision. However, overall, the government

supervision and reform activities of the Ministry of Government Efficiency demonstrate the "agility" of agile governance, being fast and accurate; but they fail to demonstrate or even lack the adaptability and flexibility characteristics of agile governance. Therefore, this study also represents a marginal expansion of the current theory and practice of agile governance in the digital intelligence era.

II. Three Theoretical Implications of the Government Efficiency Department's Government Oversight and Reform

The government oversight and reform initiatives of the Department of Government Efficiency have had a significant impact on the operations of the U.S. federal government in less than six months. These initiatives involve government-society relations, the distribution of government power, the allocation of government resources, the U.S. two-party political system, and debates over U.S. political and legal principles. The above are direct reactions, but from a broader perspective and with deeper reflection, the Department of Government Efficiency can provide us with more valuable insights and theoretical implications regarding the integration of artificial intelligence into government oversight and reform.

(1) Artificial intelligence significantly expands the boundaries of human rationality and assists in building a high-quality government through rational construction

1. American scholars' rational explorations of government construction

As the birthplace of modern public administration, the United States has maintained a leading theoretical position in every phase of the development of public administration theory, including traditional public administration theory, new public administration theory, new public management theory, and the post-1990s theories of new public services, new public governance, new public values, e-government, digital government, and agile governance. These developments have exerted a profound influence on public administration studies and government construction and reform practices worldwide. The birth of public administration studies can be traced back to Woodrow Wilson's 1887 essay, "A Study of the Administration of the United States." [9] The call for a new public administration emphasizing fairness also originated in the United States. [10] The new public management era emphasized improving the efficiency of the public sector through the introduction of market competition mechanisms and performance evaluation. [11] The book Reforming Government by American scholars David O'Brien and Ted Kihlgren is a classic work that had a wide-reaching influence during this period. Rejecting new public management, American scholars Jane Dunning and Bob Dunning proposed the new public service philosophy that the government should serve citizens rather than act as a "steersman." [12] In the theory of new public governance, American scholars Elinor Ostrom and James Rosenau also made outstanding theoretical contributions.[13][14] Mark Moore, an American scholar who emphasized that the role of government managers should shift from "efficient executors" to "creators of public value,"[15] is the most prominent representative of the new public value theory. Given the United States' leading position in digital technology and artificial intelligence, American scholars have also made significant contributions to research on smart government and agile governance.[16]

2. The exploratory efforts of American scholars have not significantly improved human rationality

American scholars have conducted extensive rational thinking and theoretical innovation in public administration, and the deepening of theoretical development and rational understanding has also driven the practice of government construction and reform. However, the American government organization has failed to pass the test under the supervision and scrutiny of powerful artificial intelligence, instead exposing numerous, even absurd, issues. This outcome confirms that Americans' exceptional rational exploration of public administration has not resulted in the creation of a perfect government, nor even a satisfactory one. This outcome fully illustrates the explanatory power of Herbert Simon's concept of "bounded rationality" as proposed in his book *Management by the Molecular Method*. Simon argued that humans are not entirely rational when making decisions but are constrained by factors such as information processing capacity and time limitations. Thus, Simon proposed the theory of satisfactory decision-making, which states that the optimal solution to a

problem may be difficult to obtain, but a suboptimal solution is also acceptable. [17]Under conditions of bounded rationality, the government system, as a product of human bounded rationality, may never achieve a perfect state, and may even be far from a satisfactory state.

If we abstract the government as a system of human society and observe it, the Government Efficiency Department's examination of the US federal government seems to corroborate Friedrich von Hayek's view that effective rules in human society are mainly based on the natural evolution of survival and competitive interactions within social self-organization, and that human rationality cannot play an effective role in design and control. [18] Human rationality is limited. The United States, guided by leading public administration theory, has failed to satisfactorily design and control the organizational activities of the government, resulting in numerous issues. The theoretical explorations of U.S. scholars in public administration theory have not significantly improved the limitations of human rationality in constructing an ideal government.

3. Artificial Intelligence Enables the Significant Expansion of Human Rationality

Although constrained by limited rationality, humanity still seeks to utilize its wisdom and thinking to pursue government reform and enhance government quality. From a long-term historical perspective, human rationality has been slowly but steadily advancing toward the goal of constructing a higher-quality government. Historical facts are evident: through rational construction and historical negation, the quality of modern state governments, compared to feudal state governments, is superior in terms of government stance, government capacity, government efficiency, and government integrity. Therefore, we must acknowledge the positive role of the historical, gradual expansion of human rationality in the construction and reform of government, [19] and we must value humanity's ability to construct institutions and reform government based on the accumulation of rational knowledge. [20]

The government supervision and reform practices promoted by the Ministry of Government Efficiency actually demonstrate that artificial intelligence has significantly expanded the boundaries of human limited rationality. Although human limited rationality determines that a perfect government is impossible, for example, from the perspective of integrity, it is difficult for government departments and officials to completely eliminate corruption and waste; or from the perspective of dedication, it is difficult for government departments and officials to completely eliminate bureaucratic formalism and laziness; and from the perspective of fairness and justice, it is difficult for government departments and officials to be completely impartial and free from any improper influence from interest groups or social relationships, and so on. However, before the supervision of the Ministry of Government Efficiency, people did not have a comprehensive, quantitative, complete, and clear understanding of the extent to which the government was imperfect or the severity of the problems it faced. However, with the help of artificial intelligence, humans can now accurately quantify, specify, penetrate, and comprehensively understand and grasp these government issues. In other words, artificial intelligence proves that the limitations of human rationality have led to many shocking problems in government, but at the same time, it enables humans to recognize and grasp these problems, thereby expanding the boundaries of human rationality. Moreover, due to the disruptive performance improvement of AI represented by ChatGPT in 2022 and the subsequent technological explosion and rapid iteration speed, the expansion of the boundaries of human rationality is leapfrogging and very significant. In empowering government governance, it will also greatly expand people's rational cognitive abilities and scientific action capabilities regarding government construction and reform.

4. Artificial intelligence helps humans break through the "black box" of government and significantly enhance government oversight capabilities

The significant expansion of human rationality enabled by AI facilitates the breaking of the so-called government "black box." The "black box" phenomenon in government is a major obstacle to government oversight. Political system analyst Easton proposed the concept of the decision-making black box, arguing that the public policies provided by the government are decided within the government in a process that can be considered a black box. [21]In the process of government reform,

people pursue a transparent government, construct an open and transparent decision-making process, and advocate for the openness of public decision-making power [22],with the aim of enabling the supervision of the decision-making black box and thereby improving the quality of public policies. However, the openness and transparency pursued by a transparent government and the openness of power operations still have significant limitations. Overall, they represent external supervision and are often post-hoc supervision after policies are implemented. Charles Lindblom's incremental decision-making theory argues that the formulation of public policies is a complex process in which power-holding actors within the government "exercise power or influence over one another." [23] The above scholars primarily focus on the existence of a black box in the decision-making process, but the execution stage remains prone to the presence of a black box. The widespread phenomena of policy deviations, lip service, power overreach, or power vacuums in reality serve as clear evidence of this. The government's black box has diverse underlying causes, and the penetration capabilities of artificial intelligence vary depending on these distinct factors, as will be elaborated later in this paper. However, artificial intelligence does , technically, grant people the ability to efficiently and comprehensively supervise and scrutinize government behavior, thereby aiding humanity in rationally identifying pathways to break through the government's black box.

We must fully recognize the significant expansion of the limits of human rationality brought about by artificial intelligence, and use the enhanced rationality provided by artificial intelligence to understand the laws of effective rule formation in human natural evolution as described by Hayek. We should explore ways to optimize government operations, break the government black box, and, on this basis, continuously seek to construct a higher-quality government. The Ministry of Government Efficiency represents another effort in the construction and reform of human governments. Currently, the government supervision and reform carried out by the Ministry of Government Efficiency are short-lived, and the ministry itself may cease to exist after Elon Musk's departure in May 2025. Nevertheless, the supervisory effectiveness of the Ministry of Government Efficiency in utilizing artificial intelligence to oversee government operations is highly impactful, and it cannot be ruled out that the reforms initiated by the ministry may have long-term implications in the future.

(2) The "immoral economic agent" attributes of certain groups within the government are the human factors undermining the effectiveness of government oversight.

1. The extreme complexity of human nature

All disciplines within philosophy and the social sciences acknowledge that human nature is extremely complex. Human nature fundamentally influences the quality of all social behavior exhibited by entities organized in any form. Therefore, the study of human nature has become a foundational and enduring theme in philosophy and the social sciences, yielding a wealth of theoretical insights.

Adam Smith, the founder of classical economics, used the "economic man" hypothesis to explain that the behavior of economically rational individuals pursuing self-interest can achieve the creation of social wealth and improve the welfare of every individual. [24]Understanding the behavior of actors in the private market sector through the "economic man" perspective is the most basic approach. Regarding people in the political sphere, many thinkers throughout history have placed their hopes in the virtue of political actors. A typical example is Hegel, who strongly believed that state power "has always acted in the interest of the state and dedicated itself to universal purposes," and forcefully declared that "the assumption that the government is governed by an evil and not very benevolent will is a view of the lower classes and a negative perspective." [25] In ancient Chinese governance thought, officials were also metaphorically referred to as the "parents of the people," effectively endowing the official class with altruistic human attributes such as "public person."

Whether it is Smith's "economic man" or Hegel's indirect reference to the "public man," neither is one-dimensional; both possess complex human attributes. Smith himself countered the concept of the "economic man" in The Theory of Moral Sentiments. Human nature possesses multiple attributes in specific socio-economic, cultural, and legal environments, especially in specific interpersonal

networks. It can be a rational economic being, a social being with emotional needs as described by the interpersonal relations school, or a moral altruist with firm ideals and beliefs. In real life, a specific individual is often a composite of multiple attributes. In different contexts, one attribute may play a dominant role. The specific behavior of individuals in the lived world is often the result of the combined influence of different attributes under the guidance of the dominant attribute.

2. The "immoral economic agent" attribute in government officials

As Hegel indirectly pointed out in The Philosophy of Right, government officials who hold public power undoubtedly possess the attribute of being "public persons" who serve the public interest. Although the intensity of the "public person" attribute may vary among different government officials, we certainly cannot conclude that the government universally lacks the "public person" attribute. Government officials obtain legitimate and reasonable self-interest rewards through altruistic behavior in serving the people. In this regard, there is no fundamental difference between government officials benefiting themselves through altruism and market entities benefiting themselves through altruism; they are morally neutral. The "public person" attribute of government officials is universal and diverse, and there is also the problem of its failure in specific power and resource relationship scenarios. The public choice school of thought has deeply recognized this point and uses the "economic man" hypothesis as the starting point for analyzing the behavior of government officials, arguing that government officials, as "economic men," also pursue the maximization of personal utility, [26] and their behavior is often driven by self-interested goals such as salary, power, promotion opportunities, and even ill-gotten gains. [27] However, what has not been clearly articulated is that the "economic man" in the market, who acts in a self-interested manner to benefit others through profit-seeking behavior under the premise of no legal prohibition, is morally neutral; whereas the "economic man" in government public service must be analyzed in a dual manner. As "economic man," if government officials pursue wages, power, promotion opportunities, etc., by performing their duties in accordance with the law to serve the people, although there are self-interested motives involved, their "economic man" attribute is also morally neutral, and they have not violated the moral bottom line of being a "public man." Here, classifying government officials as either "economic actors" or "public actors" is equivalent and has no essential difference. However, if government officials can work selflessly, govern diligently for the people, and be willing to make sacrifices under certain conditions, such government officials transcend the "economic actor" and become "moral economic actors."

However, if government officials pursue self-interest through the following two means, their "economic agent" nature is no longer morally neutral, let alone moral. First, negative attitudes and behaviors. Under conditions of fixed public office compensation, government officials reduce their actual labor input as a means of implicit gain, resulting in the quality of public affairs management stagnating or deteriorating and causing the loss of public value. Second, government officials treat power as an economic resource to be managed, transforming into "power capitalists" corresponding to capitalists in the market, operating public office and public power as their own capital, thereby embezzling public interests and harming the welfare of the people. This constitutes a severe perversion of power. The self-interested "economic agent" attributes of government officials in these two scenarios are not morally neutral. We refer to them as "immoral economic agents" because they betray the trust of the people and violate the moral baseline of "public servants." The core characteristic of "immoral economic actors" is to seek self-interest in public service by means of harming public interests. The failure of the Government Efficiency Department's government supervision and reform initiatives, when attributed to human nature, stems from the strong resistance of a large group of government officials acting as "immoral economic actors" who form a vested interest group.

3. The Generation Mechanism of "Immoral Economic Agents" and Their Resistance to Supervision and Reform

Scholars and government policymakers aim to prevent government officials from becoming "immoral economic agents" through institutional design. Michel Foucault's disciplinary theory argues

that modern power shapes individual behavior through "disciplinary techniques" such as evaluation, promotion, and supervision. [28]The U.S. Civil Service Reform Act and other laws and institutions incorporate "disciplinary techniques," but the Ministry of Government Efficiency revealed that these techniques failed to prevent moral decline among certain groups of government officials. Foucault's "disciplinary techniques" also fail to prevent the emergence of "immoral economic agents." Inefficient or ineffective discipline is one of the causes of "immoral economic agents." Government officials, as agents in an agency relationship, exhibit self-interested behavior (moral hazard), which is a persistent issue in government operations. The agency identity is also a systemic and practical cause of "immoral economic agents." Of course, the intrinsic root of the "immoral economic agent" lies in the fact that all humans have a self-interested side, and even a dark side of humanity that harms others for personal gain. Moreover, once government officials find themselves in an environment where "immoral economic agent" behavior exists, the self-interested or dark side of human nature is easily activated, and even government officials who are morally neutral or morally upright may fall into the "opportunism" [29]"moral numbness" [30])and other factors, falling into the category of "immoral economic agents." The concept of "immoral economic agents" has a narrower scope than the "economic agent" in the public choice school but a broader scope than the objects covered by the rent-seeking theory.

The supervisory activities of the Government Efficiency Department have exposed serious issues such as bureaucratism, inefficiency, management chaos, and bloated institutions, confirming the negative performance of some government officials as "immoral economic actors"; The massive wasteful or even fraudulent expenditures resulting from numerous unnecessary government contracts and improper fiscal payments, as well as the rent-seeking behavior fostered by excessive regulation, imply that some government officials, as "immoral economic agents," have degenerated into power-seeking individuals who use their authority as a means to seek rent, severely undermining the quality of government operations. Francis Fukuyama emphasizes that an "effective state" must possess both "state capacity" and "rule of law constraints." [31] Although the United States possesses strong state capacity and claims to be a country governed by the rule of law, it still cannot avoid the widespread existence of "immoral economic actors" within its government. If this is the case in the United States, then the problem of "immoral economic actors" must be even more complex in other Western countries, especially in developing countries with weak state capacity, inadequate rule of law, and insufficient government oversight. Therefore, "immoral economic actors" are a real presence within the government population and cannot be completely eliminated. As a group with vested interests, they naturally harbor strong opposition to artificial intelligence supervision that is unfavorable to them. Any reform measures or efforts to enhance governance efficiency in government operations must always prioritize addressing the human factors underlying "immoral economic actors" as a critical area for prevention.

(3) While AI possesses powerful capabilities, its application in government supervision and reform has inherent limitations, and a technocratic approach must be avoided.

1. Two reasons why government supervision is difficult to achieve perfectly

Since the establishment of the state, in all previous eras and under any institutional or systemic conditions, achieving comprehensive and systematic supervision of government and official behavior has been a challenging yet elusive goal. The difficulties of supervision have led to persistent issues such as corruption, waste, bureaucratism, and governance chaos within government departments throughout history, which have proven resistant to eradication despite repeated efforts. The revelations by the U.S. Office of Government Efficiency about the numerous chaotic phenomena in the operation of the U.S. government, which are beyond people's imagination, vividly demonstrate the challenges of government supervision and reform.

Supervision of government power, government organizations, and officials is a complex issue that is difficult to resolve perfectly due to two fundamental reasons. First, fundamentally, the government holds a monopoly on administrative power, which is an objective fact of modern state systems. From the perspectives of cost and order, a country can only have one government, and this

inherent monopoly on administrative power creates significant obstacles to supervising the government and implementing reforms. This institutional monopoly on administrative power facilitates the government and officials' subjective avoidance or even resistance to supervision and reform. The subjective avoidance or resistance of supervision by the government and officials often makes the operation of the government a so-called "black box" process to the outside world. Second, government activities are extremely complex. In any country, government operations involve large amounts of capital flows, material flows, information flows, etc. Government operations are carried out by a large number of departments and individual staff members, and are completed through interaction with the whole society. The sheer volume of resources, the multitude of operational links, the spatial and temporal dispersion, and the involvement of a vast number of personnel both within and outside the government are all significant constraints. Despite the fact that countries around the world have explored and established systems of government supervision, the actual results have been far from ideal. Even with stringent anti-corruption measures and sustained efforts to promote integrity, bureaucratism, corruption, waste, and the misuse, absence, or misplacement of power within government organizations continue to persist.

2. Advantages and Limitations of AI in Empowering Government Oversight

The U.S. Department of Management and Budget's use of artificial intelligence to oversee and evaluate the federal government demonstrates how AI can address the second technical challenge in government oversight: the complexity of government activities. Traditional methods such as manual audits, hierarchical supervision, and other forms of external oversight have been unable to effectively address the challenges posed by the massive amounts of funds, resources, information, and personnel involved in government activities, which make comprehensive, thorough, precise, and all-encompassing oversight difficult. However, AI, by leveraging the synergistic advantages of big data, computing power, and algorithms, [32] to build AI large models, provides the technical possibility for comprehensive oversight of government operations. We have seen that the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency, with a small staff, was able to supervise and reveal very comprehensive, detailed, and serious issues in the operation of the U.S. federal government in a very short period of time. This demonstrates that artificial intelligence can penetrate the "black box" of government caused by the extreme complexity of government activities.

However, the swift dissolution of the Department of Government Efficiency indicates that AI has inherent limitations when confronting the "black box" of government caused by the monopoly of administrative power and the strong resistance to supervision and reform stemming from the unwillingness of government agencies and officials to fully transparently disclose their actions. AI provides the technical possibility of comprehensive, high-efficiency supervision without blind spots in government oversight and audits. However, it remains merely a technical possibility. No matter how powerful AI technology becomes, it still faces the challenges posed by the first cause of the government oversight dilemma. These challenges are both structural and human in nature. Therefore, when considering the integration of AI into government oversight, we must fully recognize its limitations and avoid falling into the trap of technocracy.

Furthermore, artificial intelligence itself has technical limitations. First is the quality of artificial intelligence models. This includes two aspects. One is whether the program design used in the model is advanced and applicable, whether there are algorithmic biases, whether the model parameters are set reasonably, whether they are tailored to the characteristics of government operations and government personnel behavior, and whether they accurately reflect the needs of the application scenario. If these issues cannot be ruled out, artificial intelligence cannot function effectively and may even lead to misjudgments and chaos. Second, AI models require high-quality datasets for training. However, the collection and preprocessing of government datasets, due to their massive volume, dispersion across various departments, and diverse formats, may result in poor-quality datasets, which in turn can impair the application performance of AI models.

Second is the issue of ethical controversies surrounding artificial intelligence technology. The comprehensive and uncompromising government oversight of artificial intelligence poses a

significant risk of data breaches involving government administrative data and information related to administrative counterparts, which could constitute a serious violation of individuals' privacy rights. Privacy rights are of critical importance to individual autonomy and the construction of personal identity. [33] The high-level supervision of AI has led to widespread digital surveillance of people, exposing them to the existential risks of a "panopticon" in the digital age. [34] The high-level supervision of AI enables it to access vast amounts of public and private information, which is highly likely to spark widespread ethical controversies and opposition.

Another issue is the reliability of AI. Currently, many generative AI technologies have reliability issues, such as fabricating facts and outputting false information to users. The so-called AI model hallucinations are one manifestation of this. Model hallucinations originate from model design and training, and their occurrence can lead to technical "errors," undermining the credibility of technical oversight. The controversy between the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency and the Social Security Administration during the review of Social Security accounts, in a sense, reflects the technical limitations of AI itself.

Theoretical understanding is ultimately aimed at improving our practices. The integration of AI into government oversight and reform is still a relatively new endeavor. Although the Department of Government Efficiency's initiative in the United States ended in failure, it also highlighted many of its achievements. From this, we have gained insights into the potential of AI to significantly expand the boundaries of human rationality, recognized the complex relationship between human nature and technological rationality, and identified the limitations of AI. From a developmental perspective, we should fully leverage technological advancements to drive the progress of this endeavor. The integration of AI into government oversight and reform is an inevitable trend. We must fully draw on the successes and failures of the Government Efficiency Department's practices, deeply absorb the theoretical insights it has provided, and use them to guide and optimize the path of AI integration into government oversight.

III. Five-Dimensional Pathway Design for the Integration of AI into Government Oversight

The development of all human endeavors often involves a process of trial and error, continuous summarization of experience and lessons learned, accumulation of rational understanding, grasping the laws of development, and ultimately enhancing the ability to adapt to and transform the world. The integration of artificial intelligence into government supervision must be based on a comprehensive analysis of the government supervision and reform practices of the Government Efficiency Department, grasping its successes and failures from a theoretical perspective, optimizing practical effectiveness, and truly unleashing the immense potential of artificial intelligence to empower government supervision. To this end, we have designed a five-dimensional practical path of "technology empowerment, institutional embedding, improvement orientation, consensus consideration, and moral cultivation" to seek the effective embedding of artificial intelligence into the government supervision process, and to make this process more in line with the important characteristics of agile governance in the digital intelligence era, such as speed, efficiency, precision, flexibility, and adaptability.

(1) Adhering to the reform direction of leveraging AI technology to empower government supervision

The Government Efficiency Department led by Elon Musk has clearly demonstrated the powerful role of AI technology in assisting government supervision and reform. The massive amounts of data on government operations and official behavior would be extremely time-consuming and incomplete if audited or inspected using traditional manual methods. The rapid identification of fiscal waste and fraud, management chaos, bureaucracy, inefficiency, and corruption by the Government Efficiency Department fully demonstrates the exceptional capabilities of AI in government supervision. A particularly striking example is the use of AI to conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of all Social Security accounts in the United States, uncovering a significant number of issues. Conducting such a review using traditional manual audit methods would be nearly impossible.

With the powerful computational power, algorithms, and data processing capabilities of AI, the operational status of the U.S. federal government and the behavior of its officials were thoroughly scrutinized, revealing problems that are truly alarming. From the perspectives of justice and efficiency, the Ministry of Government Efficiency should be strongly supported. Artificial intelligence has indeed greatly expanded the boundaries of human rationality in government supervision, enabling people to pierce the "black box" of government, understand the comprehensive details of government operations, summarize the true patterns of government operations and official behavior, and seek improvements in the quality of government operations based on these insights. The integration of artificial intelligence into government oversight is a new phenomenon for government governance and will inevitably face numerous obstacles, challenges, and even "troubles." However, these obstacles, challenges, and "troubles" should not lead to abandoning the use of artificial intelligence to empower government oversight. In the digital age, advancing agile governance, embracing technological change, and adhering to the reform direction of empowering government oversight with artificial intelligence are unavoidable demands of the times.

(2) Adhering to the institutional integration of artificial intelligence into government supervision

1. Campaign-style government reforms violate the principle of caution

The swift failure of the Ministry of Government Efficiency's government supervision reform, in a certain sense, highlights the flaws of campaign-style reforms and warrants serious reflection. Campaign-style reforms are characterized by using noble or even lofty goals as the basis for legitimacy, largely bypassing existing legal and procedural frameworks, adopting radical measures, and rapidly implementing governance initiatives on a large scale to achieve efficient changes in the status quo. Campaign-style reforms violate the requirements of prudence in government operations and reforms. Luhmann pointed out that under the influence of internal and external factors, large open complex systems run the risk of becoming unstable. [35] As a product of the rise of the administrative state, modern government systems must avoid the risk of instability, which requires that major reforms be carried out with a sense of prudence. In the industrial and post-industrial eras, regardless of the ideology espoused by those in power, the mainstream trend has been toward large governments following the rise of the administrative state. Large governments are closely intertwined with the market, society, and people's livelihoods, together constituting the living world of people as a super-complex system. The larger the country, the more complex and massive this living world becomes. As the governor of this super-complex system, the government bears an indispensable responsibility for the stable functioning of society. Ancient Chinese governance wisdom held that "governing a large country is like cooking a small fish," emphasizing the requirement of prudence in government governance, i.e., government governance should not rashly break away from the existing operational state through sudden, impetuous changes, nor should it rely solely on noble aspirations and sudden enthusiasm to advance drastic reforms through campaign-style approaches. In this sense, prudence implies that the integration of artificial intelligence technology should not cause sudden disruptive impacts on the normal operations of the government. The other meaning is that the integration of AI into government oversight should be a gradual process, allowing historical contradictions to be resolved during the transition period to achieve a smooth transition. The Department of Government Efficiency, led by its key figure Elon Musk, leveraged AI's advanced technical capabilities with the support of U.S. President Trump to conduct a campaign-style reform, swiftly conducting surprise inspections of the federal government, identifying issues, and implementing bold corrective measures. However, due to the disruption of the overall stability and continuity of government operations—key requirements of prudence—the initiative ultimately failed.

2. Institutional Embedding to Ensure Prudent Requirements

To avoid the instability and imprudence of the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency's campaign-style model, artificial intelligence should be embedded into government oversight through institutional mechanisms. Institutions include various laws, regulations, and voluntary agreements. German institutionalist scholars Ke Wugang and Shi Manfei's institutional theory posits that

institutions shape and constrain human behavior, enhance the predictability of behavior, foster trust among individuals, and promote division of labor and coordination. [36] Therefore, reasonable and effective institutional arrangements can provide order and stability. To embed AI in government oversight, institutional arrangements are needed to ensure prudence, thereby achieving the institutional embedding of AI. These institutional arrangements include defining the following key issues. First, what kind of AI models should be developed and embedded? It is necessary to ensure the applicability and accuracy of AI, avoid the technical limitations of AI models, and prevent the risk of AI models being manipulated by human factors and becoming mere facades. Second, when, where, and by whom AI models should be operated and for what scope. This is achieved by providing clear explanations and guarantees for the integration process of AI through institutional arrangements. Third, the scope of disclosure and use of the results of AI supervision of government operations and official conduct, and who is responsible for the use of AI supervision results. Fourth, the frequency of AI government supervision, as well as the retention period and confidentiality protection measures for information obtained through supervision. This is to avoid excessive supervision causing psychological burdens on those being supervised through institutional measures. Institutional embedding is the fundamental guarantee for ensuring the orderly and prudent integration of AI into government supervision. It is particularly important that these institutional arrangements be confirmed through legislation to ensure legal safeguards. In practical implementation, AI should also have a phased and incremental institutional plan, starting with pilot programs at certain levels or in selected departments, summarizing lessons learned, and then gradually expanding the scope.

(3) The fundamental purpose of AI technology supervision of government is to promote improvement through supervision

1. The large-scale layoffs of personnel by the Ministry of Government Efficiency contradict the fundamental purpose of supervision to promote improvement

In government governance, supervision of government operations and official conduct has never been an end in itself but rather a means to enhance the quality of government operations. The functions of execution and supervision have always been integral to the framework of government operations. The comprehensive and all-encompassing supervision of government operations and official conduct by AI technology exposes numerous issues in the actions of executive agencies and officials. This provides a driving force to deter "unethical economic actors" within the government and encourage them to reform their behavior, thereby helping government agencies and officials overcome their shortcomings, enhance their capabilities, improve efficiency, fulfill their responsibilities, and contribute to the construction of a transparent, efficient, clean, and people-oriented government that continuously creates public value for the people. However, the Government Efficiency Department's government supervision and reform have adopted radical measures such as directly and massively laying off government staff, shutting down government agencies, and halting government projects and contracts. In other words, the Government Efficiency Department has not given a large number of agencies and government officials the opportunity to improve themselves, their work, and their capabilities.

2. Effectively implement supervision to drive improvement

We should genuinely use artificial intelligence-based government supervision as a means to improve the behavior of government agencies and officials, and ensure that this is truly implemented. We should shift from simply "identifying problems—reducing personnel, agencies, and fiscal allocations" to "identifying problems—helping personnel and agencies recognize problems—enhancing the ability of agencies and personnel to use artificial intelligence technology to improve their work capabilities," thereby addressing the problems identified by artificial intelligence. AI should especially empower government agencies and officials with the ability to self-monitor, thereby triggering self-learning and self-improvement. Promoting improvement through supervision is the core essence of AI's application in government supervision. This must be clearly planned in the action plan for embedding AI into government supervision.

From the perspective of the interaction between understanding and practice, the work of the

Ministry of Government Efficiency remains largely confined to the level of empirical facts and "techniques." We should make full use of AI technology to discover new patterns in government operations and official behavior based on a large amount of facts and data, and explore the patterns of AI integration into government operations to reach the level of rational cognition. Using rational cognition of patterns as the guiding principle for the application of AI in government operations will help promote improvement through supervision in the right direction and improve the quality of government operations. This is a higher-level requirement for AI to promote improvement through supervision.

(4) The integration of artificial intelligence into government supervision must align with the basic consensus of the public administration field

1. The Ministry of Government Efficiency violated three basic consensus points of the public administration field

After identifying serious issues in government operations and official conduct, the Ministry of Government Efficiency adopted radical measures such as rapid large-scale layoffs, merger and abolition of agencies, and suspension of relevant fiscal allocations, which clearly violate at least three fundamental consensus points within the public administration field. First, civil servants in modern states are generally guaranteed "career tenure." As early as Max Weber's theory of bureaucratic hierarchy, theoretical arguments were made for the career tenure of government officials. The Pendleton Act of 1883, the Civil Service Reform Act of 1973, and the Hudson Temporary Employees Equal Rights Act of 1993 in the United States all aim to protect the career tenure and job stability of government officials. The Ministry of Government Efficiency's swift and large-scale layoffs clearly violated this agreement between the state and government officials. Second, government agencies are established in accordance with functional needs and legal provisions. The Ministry of Government Efficiency's decision to swiftly shut down certain government agencies after identifying issues with them clearly failed to adequately consider the functional role, value, and legal procedures associated with agency establishment. Third, public policies have a lifecycle. Governments implement public policies to achieve governance objectives and provide fiscal support through budget allocations. After identifying issues, the Ministry of Government Efficiency swiftly halted fiscal allocations for relevant government projects, which largely contravenes the lifecycle principles of public policy. Breaking basic consensus inevitably provokes intense resistance and opposition.

2. The integration of artificial intelligence into government supervision must adhere to a consensus-based approach

We should pay close attention to the lessons learned from the Ministry of Government Efficiency's breaking of basic consensus in public administration in its supervision and reform of the government. We must move beyond the Ministry of Government Efficiency's simplistic and brutal use of high technology to "identify problems—cut personnel, institutions, and financial allocations," which breaks the basic consensus in public administration. The consensus-oriented approach requires us to deeply recognize the wisdom of human government construction embodied in the consensus on professional tenure, institutional legality, and policy cycles, and to recognize the value of these consensus for maintaining the normal functioning of the state at a higher level and ensuring the well-being of the people. A consensus-based approach does not mean that we cannot make any changes to the experience and practices accumulated over history in the era of artificial intelligence. Rather, it reminds us that in practice, when touching upon basic consensus, we must adhere to the principles of high responsibility, high caution, and high predictability. Artificial intelligence should be used to supervise the government in a humane manner. We must not fall into the trap of technocracy and must pay attention to the pace and intensity of artificial intelligence's supervision of government institutions and personnel, as well as its impact on people's psychology and social psychology.

(5) Government supervision must fully utilize artificial intelligence while also focusing on cultivating human subjective morality

1. The clash between artificial intelligence and the "immoral economic agent" in government

Currently, the development of artificial intelligence is indeed different from any previous

technological breakthrough, bringing profound changes to people's work and lives, and even having disruptive impacts in some areas. With the rapid development of information technology and artificial intelligence, the application of artificial intelligence to government governance has become an important area of research in public administration. Both academia and government are highly concerned with how to utilize artificial intelligence to enhance the level of public governance. [37]The advantages of artificial intelligence in government supervision compared to traditional human-based audits are almost overwhelming. The Ministry of Government Efficiency was able to complete the government supervision work in a very short period of time. If this had been done through traditional manual supervision and inspection, it would have required a large supervision team and taken a long time to complete. Therefore, embedding artificial intelligence into government supervision is very necessary and meaningful for establishing a more efficient, cleaner, and more efficient high-quality government and shaping a high-quality government team.

However, the Ministry of Government Efficiency ceased operations after less than half a year, indicating that despite the extraordinary capabilities of AI, it remains a tool invented and used by humans. While there are many futuristic visions for the future development of AI technology, the failure of the Ministry of Government Efficiency demonstrates that the effectiveness of AI technology embedded in government operations is largely dependent on non-technical factors such as the structure of government power, interest relationships, and value orientations. Ultimately, it depends on human factors. The integration of AI into government supervision, as an organizational change, will disrupt the existing technological structure and balance, causing psychological insecurity among individuals and groups, and even leading to major changes in the structure of power and responsibility, resource allocation, and work status. [38]In this context, the integration of AI into government supervision will inevitably clash with the "immoral economic man" attribute. In a sense, the supervision and reform process of the government efficiency department has been rejected by the U.S. political establishment driven by the "immoral economic agent" paradigm. If the negative aspects of human nature are not addressed, even the introduction of AI into government operations may lead to AI-driven algorithmic discrimination, [39]data silos, [40] model hallucinations [41] and other technical limitations of AI, or even lead to deliberate technical idleness or meaningless technical idling, which would hinder the proper functioning of technology.

2. Empowering Foucault's "disciplinary technologies" through technology to strengthen moral cultivation

Given the negative effects of the collision between the "immoral economic agent" attribute of government officials and AI, embedding AI into government supervision requires not only a focus on technology but also a high regard for human factors, with the two forming a positive interaction. Emphasizing human factors means reducing the "immoral economic agent" aspect of government officials as much as possible and further transforming them into morally neutral "economic agents," ultimately cultivating government officials with high moral standards and a sense of public spirit. Foucault's "disciplinary techniques" are helpful for the moral cultivation of government officials, but one important reason for their limited effectiveness is the difficulty of supervision. With the help of artificial intelligence, the moral cultivation role of "disciplinary techniques" can be better realized. This is because artificial intelligence facilitates comprehensive and precise supervision, as well as strict evaluation and rewards/punishments. First, we should legally and orderly promote the comprehensive supervision and inspection of government operations and the official duties of government officials through artificial intelligence. The powerful supervisory capabilities of AI will create a high-risk expectation among "immoral economic actors" within the government, prompting them to voluntarily curb their immoral intentions and behaviors. Second, the results of AI-based supervision and inspection of government operations and official conduct should be transparently, promptly, and fairly reflected in rewards or punishments for government agencies and officials. By rewarding the good and punishing the bad, we can not only suppress the "immoral economic agent" attribute but also cultivate the "morally neutral economic agent" attribute, and even shape the spirit of dedication among government officials. Third, we should place great emphasis on ideological and

moral education. The integration of AI into government supervision provides a "hard" education on moral values for government officials, while ideological and moral education is a "soft" form of education aimed at guiding officials through positive reinforcement to continuously elevate their ideological standards and selfless dedication, and pursue higher life values. The combination of soft and hard moral education is conducive to shaping a high-quality government workforce. A high-quality government workforce, in turn, promotes the effective integration of artificial intelligence into government supervision, fully leveraging its technological potential to support high-quality government development.

IV. Conclusion

This paper focuses on the highly relevant case of the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency's government oversight and reform initiative. Its significance lies not only in revealing the challenges of integrating artificial intelligence into government oversight but also in providing a unique analytical framework for theoretical and practical innovations in public administration in the digital age. By analyzing the successes and failures of the technology-driven reforms led by Silicon Valley entrepreneur Elon Musk at the Department of Government Efficiency, this paper offers a clear theoretical lens and practical insights for understanding the integration of artificial intelligence into government oversight and reform.

(1) Multi-dimensional insights from the research findings

Through a comprehensive review of the reforms implemented by the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency, this paper identifies four core findings. First, technological empowerment is reshaping the paradigm of government oversight. AI has broken through the temporal, spatial, and capability constraints of traditional administrative oversight, ushering government oversight into an era of full-sample precision analysis. This technological empowerment not only enhances oversight efficiency but also corrects the traditional "limited rationality" framework, demonstrating the immense potential of technological breakthroughs in enhancing human problem-solving capabilities. Second, humanity faces a reality check. The massive chaos uncovered by the Department of Government Efficiency in the operation of the U.S. federal government exposes the widespread existence of lazy or illegal behavior among government officials, warning us that we must re-examine the shortcomings of existing government operating systems and strengthen the prevention and control of moral hazards in government behavior. Finally, the model of using the powerful functions of artificial intelligence to promote government supervision in a campaign-style manner is not feasible. The pace of government supervision and reform promoted by the Government Efficiency Department can be described as "short, flat, and fast," revealing the characteristics of "campaign-style reform" and highlighting the conflict between rapid technological empowerment and traditional governance models. Although the reform achieved many morally justifiable results in the short term, it was met with widespread resistance due to its overly radical nature. Ultimately, the Government Efficiency Department was unable to continue due to the lack of a stable institutionalized embedding mechanism, providing a negative example for the sustainability of technological governance.

(2) Marginal Contributions to Theoretical Construction

This paper makes three marginal contributions at the theoretical level. First, through an analysis of the operational effectiveness of the Ministry of Government Efficiency, it reveals the dynamic corrective effect of technological progress on the boundaries of rationality, proposing that "artificial intelligence significantly expands the limited rational boundaries of humans," thereby injecting a new explanatory dimension into the rational construction of high-quality government in the era of artificial intelligence. Second, it revises the analytical framework of the human nature assumption. By comparing the "economic man" attributes of market actors with those of government officials, it builds upon the "economic man" assumption of the public choice school and introduces the analytical category of the "immoral economic man," offering new insights into the human nature-related causes of government dysfunction and internal resistance to reform within government organizations. Third, in the era of artificial intelligence sweeping across the globe and penetrating all industries, this paper reminds people to break the technical myth of artificial intelligence and confirm its limitations in

government governance. It points out that artificial intelligence provides only technical possibilities for optimizing government supervision, and its actual effectiveness is still affected by various factors such as the monopoly of government power, the attitudes of officials, and the technical limitations of artificial intelligence itself. Additionally, this study on the integration of AI into government supervision represents a marginal expansion of research in the field of agile governance in the digital age, contributing to the exploration and enrichment of agile governance theory.

(3) An important mirror for practical value

Based on a thorough analysis of the successes and failures of the U.S. Department of Management and Budget's government oversight and reform efforts and their theoretical implications, introduces the concept of "institutional embedding" of artificial intelligence technology into government oversight research and constructs a five-dimensional practical path of "technology empowerment, institutional embedding, improvement orientation, consensus consideration, and moral cultivation," providing valuable practical guidance for government oversight and reform in the era of artificial intelligence. In the era of artificial intelligence, it is necessary to insist on embedding artificial intelligence technology into government oversight while avoiding technocracy. The integration of technology into government supervision requires stability and institutional embedding as conditions, with the rule of law as its guarantee. The integration of artificial intelligence into government supervision should also adhere to supervision as a means and the improvement of government institutions and officials' capabilities as its goal. The technical rationality of artificial intelligence must also take into account the basic consensus formed by people in the history of government operations, such as the career tenure of civil servants. If these basic consensus are not respected, it will cause significant interference with the integration of artificial intelligence. The integration of AI into government supervision should also attach great importance to the moral education of government officials, so as to achieve a positive interaction between the application of AI technology and the improvement of the moral character of government officials. In the AI era, the essence of government supervision is the dynamic balance between technology and institutions, technology and historical consensus, and technology and humanity. The rise and fall of the US Office of Management and Budget shows that any attempt to rely solely on technological breakthroughs and rapidly advance reforms in a "campaign-style" manner is often unsustainable. Empowering government oversight with AI inevitably requires the deep integration and synergistic evolution of technological rationality, institutional construction, capability enhancement, consensus-building, and human nature cultivation.

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