THE FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Global AI Governance and Generative AI Round table: Tuesday 16th January 2024

Organised by The Foundation of Science and Technology in collaboration with the All Party Parliamentary Group on the OECD, the roundtable saw a selection of thought leaders come together on the issue of Artificial Intelligence and global governance.

The roundtable was set up to coincide with the visit of the Deputy Secretary General of the OECD, Ulrik Knudsen, to London. Together attendees discussed AI regulation, particularly generative AI.

Attendees first heard from four participants who gave initial thoughts including global and UK perspectives view, how to harness AI's capabilities, and its substantial risks such as misinformation. This was followed by a discussion which included whether and how to "guard rail" AI, standardisation and codes of conduct. Other issues discussed included regulatory choices, standardisation, speed, lingo and fairness, and where the UK fits into the emerging global picture.

Special thanks to The Resolution Foundation for providing a venue for the Round Table.

Attendees

Alex Burghart MP

Rev. Dr. Simon Cross

Lord (Tim) Clement-Jones

Gavin Costigan

Professor Sana Khareghani

Ulrik Knudsen

Melanie Garson

Seema Malhotra MP

Professor Helen Margetts OBE

Gopal Ramchurn

Stephen Timms MP

Lord (David) Willetts FRS

Charlotte Raynsford (Observer)

Silvia Terrón (Observer)

Oliver Freeman, Office of Seema Malhotra MP (Observer)

The following points were made in discussion:

- "In all G7 countries, misinformation is considered the biggest risk with AI. Productivity is considered the biggest possible gain."
- We have already lost the battle to have one global framework for AI regulation so the key word from now on is interoperability. The OECD are well placed to champion that effort. Several tributes were paid by attendees to the OECD for their work and it was said that they should be the glue that holds things together.
- There all real risks – particularly our ability to keep a hold on the truth, and the undermining of democracy. However, we should not allow concern about these risks to mean that eh real benefits of AI are not pursued, and thought leaders taking ownership is essential. The internet was discussed as a historical example where suitable regulation and "guard rails" were not put in during its early development.
- A well-documented open letter sent earlier this year was cited as positive for raising attention to AI but possibly misguided in its asks. Stopping research into something 'dangerous' is not the answer. That will allow other world powers to take the space. We should be taking opportunity to guard rail and stay ahead of the curve. The creation of independent testers and auditors will be really important in the future.

- We should adopt common standards for AI. We need more discussion of standardisation – though it was noted that some standards are proprietary products, which has its own challenges.
- Several at the roundtable had been present at November's Bletchley Park AI Safety Summit. The UK was commended for engaging China in a meaningful way on an international stage and on safety, and for bringing together professionals from academia, policy makers, civil servants and international organisations. There was agreement that the Bletchley Park Summit presented an opportunity for agreement and consolidation. However, it was also felt that there was too much promotion by some participants of their own organisations and not enough decision making.
- There was a wider Fringe to the AI Safety Summit, with many participants and activities, including groups such as civil society who were not present at the summit itself.
- One participant noted that "One of the most extraordinary things about AI is that some of the most optimistic and pessimistic outcomes will surface together" and that the work done in the UK Government is mindful of both situations. There is a keenness to create a central point of skills within Government. This would help Government to understand new AI capability and to explore it, as well as bringing in new skills.
- Participants said that there is a lot of good work and attention on global regulation and that this was important as we hadn't been talking about it before. Models like GPT were built entirely without any moral or ethical guard rails. So significantly, everything we are doing in terms of guidelines is retrospective.
- There are parallel tracks of academic and big tech company research.
- Regulation is not a purely technical problem, it is also a societal problem.
- Engaging with the end user community is very important and should be something that more tech startups do.
- The public should be consulted more. A recent academic-led public consultation survey showed quite a positive reaction to the possibilities of AI. However, accountability was one of the main concerns.
- There is a lack of skills and understanding of the deep tech aspects of AI. We need to upskill the regulators.
- The speed by which regulation is introduced is a choice. If Governments considered the risks were sufficiently high, they could move faster.
- Regulation is hard to match across all uses and platforms. For example, what does fairness mean for a dating app, what does fairness mean for those building an automated car? We should consider gender and other biases when looking at standards and collecting data.
- We are adopting AI tech very rapidly but we don't talk about the energy required to run this level of technology. Globally, data centres now have the same energy consumption of a big country. We need to be worried about the value that AI brings to society versus to energy needed to run it. Many data centres claim to be green because the use primarily renewable energy, but in such large quantities that renewable capacity is not available for other users. And if we don't track where energy is being used for data centres, we could end up exporting our carbon emissions to other countries.
- What is missing in the conversation is the physical aspects of cyber, such as undersea cables. The geopolitics around the locations of some of these facilities and their resilience and sustainability are important. We are taking for granted that the physical structure for all of this technology will always be there and this is not necessarily true.
- Some countries still do not have a place at the table – how do we ensure that they do?
- Language and terminology is important. There's lots of lingo being passed around, such as 'hallucinated' 'regurgitation', 'redlining' and 'frontier AI'. Terms are being created and used without uniformity or clarity on what they mean.