Forum: Special Conference on Ethics (SPECON)

Issue: Introducing ethical codes for the development of AI tools

Student Officer: Konstantinos Goussios

Position: Deputy President

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) development is a topic that has caused upheaval and debate concerning the ethical guidelines around which AI tools can be developed, funded or used. It has been demonstrated that inappropriate actions can limit the benefits of this development.

As technology evolves, programs that imitate human behavior, or that can act based on traits considered exclusively "human" become easier to develop. As such, it becomes harder to understand whether a product usually attributed to human actions is actually from a human, or a result of AI-prompted activities.

Since the creation of the first programs able to perform basic intellectual tasks, artificial intelligence has been at the epicentre of recent technological advancements. The software has been capable of achieving all the more complicated tasks. This has led automated programs to beat humans at chess, develop emotions, recognise human handwriting and speech, and, more recently, design images and make music.

While this progress has enabled a great deal of later technological achievements and offered people a chance to interact with AI programs and reap their benefits, the potential effects of this are mostly unregulated, as of today, innovation has caused some people to treat them with suspicion.

It has been noticed that unregulated usage may spark problems to various degrees, ranging from simple everyday inconveniences to massive economic and social regression, like the promotion of racial or gender stereotypes, or unexpected stock market decline. These issues need to be mitigated, both through the approval of respective regulations in each UN Member State separately, and through the wider range of international cooperation.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Artificial Intelligence (AI)[1]

"Artificial intelligence is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems."

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[1] Burns, Ed, and Nicole Laskowski. "What Is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?" TechTarget, TechTarget, 2022, www.techtarget.com/searchenterpriseai/definition/AI-Artificial-Intelligence. Accessed 18 June 2023.

ChatGPT[2]

ChatGPT is an algorithm powered by AI, launched in late 2022 by OpenAI. It can hold a conversation, respond to questions and provide information through searching the web.

Facial Recognition[3]

In this context, facial recognition is a way for AI-powered software to detect and identify people by analyzing their facial characteristics. Said software may have access to photos containing people's faces when they have been uploaded online, or through direct surveillance with the aid of cameras.

Image generation[4]

This is the process through which AI tools are given requirements in text form, and they respond with the creation of images that fit these requirements. These AI tools do not search the internet for an already existing image that meets the criteria; instead, they design one on their own.

Personal data[5]

Data that can lead to the tracking of a person's activity, either online or in real life, is considered personal data. Such data can include one's name, physical or personal email address, computer ID, phone number or state-issued documents. The leak of this data, or their acquisition by third parties without their owner's explicit consent, can be considered a violation of the right to privacy. In the European Union, this type of data is covered by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a set of laws limiting their flow.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The concept of Artificial Intelligence

The concept of artificial intelligence, and human-made structures able to perform intellectual tasks only started taking shape with the invention of the first modern computers in 1946. Nevertheless, these computers were able to merely execute given commands, and not to come up with their solutions to problems. It is

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[2] OpenAI. "Introducing ChatGPT." OpenAI, OpenAI, 30 Nov. 2022, https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt. Accessed 23 June 2023.

[3] Kaspersky. "What Is Facial Recognition – Definition and Explanation." Kaspersky, 13 Jan. 2021, www.kaspersky.com/resource-center/definitions/what-is-facial-recognition. Accessed 18 June 2023.

[4] Akshita. "What Are AI Image Generators?: The Only Guide You Need." Narrato, 14 Apr. 2023, https://narrato.io/blog/what-are-ai-image-generators-how-do-they-work/. Accessed 18 June 2023.

[5] The European Commission. "What Is Personal Data?" Commission.europa.eu, https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/what-personal-data_en. Accessed 18 June 2023.

generally considered that the first piece of software behaving similarly to a present-day AI was called Theseus, and it was able to solve a maze task by itself.

Owing to massive recent technological advancements, though, certain programs are now capable of generating images or soundtracks, identifying objects and people, or adequately processing massive quantities of information.

[6]Art creation ethical concerns

It has been noticed that, in the past few years, tremendous progress has been made in the capacity of AIs to compose melodies or generate images, based on respective text prompts. In early 2021, a giant leap in this aspect was made, as the first such program, DALL-E was officially released commercially. This made image generation much easier than before and helped people gain access to paintings created specifically to align with their preferences, and at a much lower cost than what would have been required to commission a human artist.

Figure 1: Poster created in protest to the increasing involvement of AI tools in art production

DALL-E, and similar pieces of software, which have been rapidly emerging in the past two years, have been able to make their images after being exposed to online content, most of which is directly sourced from human artists who have uploaded their work online. Oftentimes, training software with the help of these pre-existing paintings takes place without the original artists' explicit permission.

Naturally, this has caused immense protests on behalf of the online art community, which considers their interests severely threatened by the AI use of their works, which they perceive as unauthorized. These artists are also disgruntled by the fact that they have not received credit or financial compensation for their participation in the AI visual arts creation. Similar issues have been raised concerning sound and music production, however, copyright protection is more extensive in that aspect, and composers enjoy greater protection.

Promotion of Social Stereotypes

Considering how AI image generation is reliant upon images available online, there is a chance for gender stereotypes present to be amplified. In particular, when tools of artificial intelligence are fed images of certain professions exercised exclusively by either men or women, they tend to associate these professions with the respective genders. As such, when asked to portray a stereotypically gendered specialization, they will abide by the stereotypes they have come in contact with.

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[6] Figure 1: Babbs, Verity. "Digital Artists Are Pushing Back against AI." Hyperallergic, 6 Mar. 2023, https://hyperallergic.com/806026/digital-artists-are-pushing-back-against-ai/ . Accessed 25 May 2023.

This means that when asked the image of a traditionally feminine job, like that of a nurse, for example, a typical AI image generation tool will put a woman in that position, and when asked to create an image of an occupation stereotypically associated with men, like that of a CEO, the program is likely to follow this idea.

AI is also prone to propagating racial stereotypes. When these tools are exposed to the idea that crime is exclusively a characteristic of people belonging to racial minorities, it is expected that they associate them with inappropriate or illegal behaviour.

Privacy Concerns[7]

Artificial Intelligence tools have also sparked concerns about the security of personal data, and violation of privacy has been decried as an important danger that needs to be taken into consideration when developing AI tools.

Violation of privacy can occur with the installation of software designed to monitor and recognize faces. The use of cameras recording activities in public spaces has been proven controversial, since it has been received as a form of surveillance, seeing the people subject to recording have not provided their explicit consent.
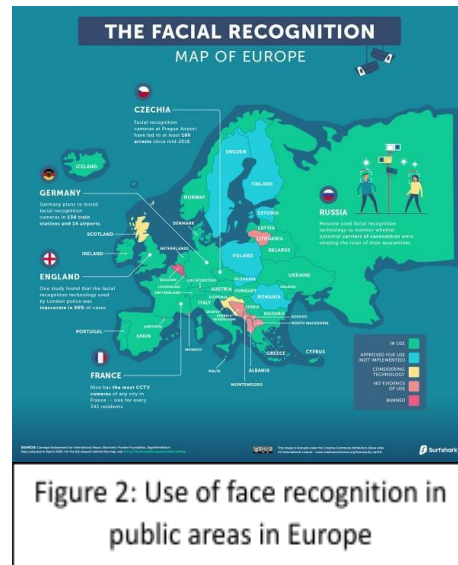
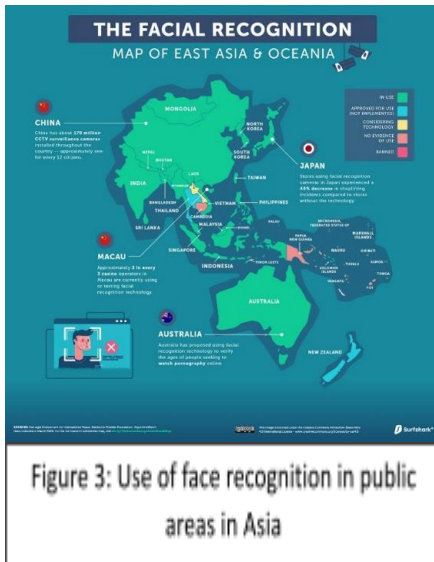Figure 2: Use of face recognition in public areas in Europe

Figure 3: Use of face recognition in public areas in Asia

Especially in cases where tracking is used to detect criminals, this kind of technology has sparked an outcry, and its inaccuracy and inefficiency have been denounced as inappropriate measures. In addition, it is feared that its use in authoritarian countries can further limit personal and civil liberties.

However, in the vast majority of jurisdictions worldwide, such technology is already being employed to monitor, to some extent, public spaces, and a few of the countries that have banned or suspended such activity.

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[7] Figures 2 and 3: Ghosh, Iman. "Mapped: The State of Facial Recognition around the World." Visual Capitalist, 22 May 2020, www.visualcapitalist.com/facial-recognition-world-map/ . Accessed 27 May 2023.

Economic and security concerns[8]

Recently, a new kind of danger arose from the abuse of AI tools. In May 2023, an AI-generated image circulated on the Internet, allegedly depicting an explosion occurring at the Pentagon, the building housing the main branch of the Department of Defense of the United States. The image was eventually proven to be misleading, but until the release of official confirmation, there was an intense commotion in the US stock market.

Figure 4: This is the image that caused the US stock market to temporarily fall by 0.26%

This was the reason behind a temporary dip in the share value of several US companies.

This incident casts light on several other potential problems that may arise from irresponsible or malicious use of AI image generation tools. The fake Pentagon explosion image may only be the first in a series of other similar instances in which the economy of a powerful nation is affected. As such, instances of this kind of deception must be prevented

Self-driving Cars Safety Concerns

It is worth mentioning the application of AI tools in the efforts to create self-driving cars. These vehicles, able to drive their passengers without the need for any of them to command them, have drawn some criticism for the ethical dilemmas they bring about, which are still unanswered.

A major question revolves around accountability concerning the involvement of said cars in traffic accidents. Some claim that the passengers should not be held accountable in case a fully automated vehicle participates in a crash, considering that they have little to no power to prevent accidents. Instead, the opinion that car manufacturers should claim the legal burden is supported.

Another problem is the prevention of intrusion into the car security systems. There needs to be a guarantee that hacking will be prevented, since gaining access to the control system of a self-driving car may be used to deliberately cause collisions.

AI involvement in judicial affairs

Artificial Intelligence has also started gaining influence in the judicial field. So far, its use has been mostly restricted to the analysis of evidence, while it does not

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[8] George, Elizabeth. "Fake AI-Generated Image Sends US Stock Price Crashing - Gearrice." Gearrice, 23 May 2023, www.gearrice.com/update/fake-ai-generated-image-sends-us-stock-price-crashing/ . Accessed 29 May 2023

hold any judicial powers. However, seeing that some AI judges have already been piloted, it is possible that, in the near future, AI can be deemed able to deliver verdicts.

This use of AI has ignited debate related to the capacity of software to exercise such duties, but it has been so far well-perceived by the general public since it is believed that AI can participate in court procedures in a manner as fair as humans do, and they are much more time-efficient while needing fewer resources.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

China[9]

China, being an emerging world economy with influence over global affairs, has been enthusiastic about the development of AI programs, considering their potential for further economic growth and increased social control.

China has been accused of facilitating the conduct of cyberattacks launched from its territory, and through its own Internet connection infrastructure. As of 2022[10] China is the country from which the plurality of cyberattacks originates. Taking into account the support AI tools can provide

Figure 5: China has been the country of origin of most cyberattacks

to launch cyberattacks successfully, China's interest in their development could mean a significant rise in the effectiveness of cyberattacks abroad and tighter social control within the country.
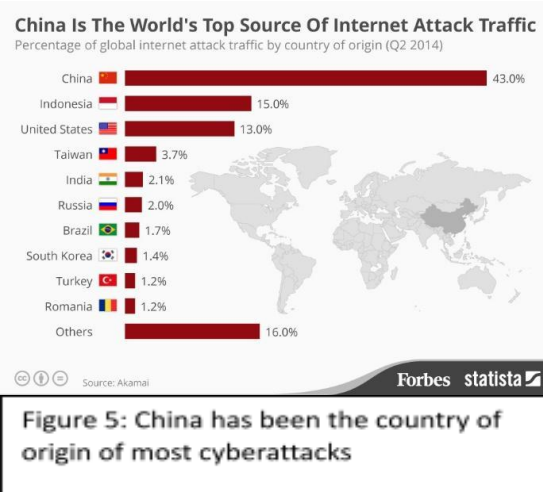
Estonia

Estonia is one of the most digitally advanced countries in the world, owing to the great extent to which the government has been interested in facilitating the digital transition. As such, Estonia has played a key role in the development of AI tools as well. Estonia has brought into service an AI program tasked with resolving small-scale legal disputes, realizing one of the first applications of such tools in the legal sector.

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[9] Figure 5: McCarthy, Niall. "Infographic: China Is the World's Top Source of Internet Attack Traffic." Statista Infographics, 8 Oct. 2014, www.statista.com/chart/2801/china-is-the-worlds-top-source-of-internet-attack-traffic/. Accessed 24 June 2023.

[10] DavidPur, Niv. "Which Countries Are Most Dangerous? Cyber Attack Origin – by Country." Blog.cyberproof.com, 4 Jan. 2022, https://blog.cyberproof.com/blog/which-countries-are-most-dangerous. Accessed 23 June 2023.

India

India has realized the potential of AI development and recognizes the opportunity to organize a viable industry on this trend. The country believes that the South Asia region has an enormous potential for AI investments, and, as such, maintains a less passionate stance on the introduction of legislation, believing that this could inhibit economic growth. Nevertheless, India vows to incorporate digital elements to make governance more efficient and accessible.

Indonesia

Indonesia aims to take advantage of the rapid worldwide AI development trend to further its plans to become a More Economically Developed Country by 2045. Indonesia considers the opportunity to contribute to this development, in order to improve the services the government can provide to their citizens. The current plan of reforms refers to the healthcare sector and to the mitigation of bureaucratic issues.

Italy

Italy maintains a stance adopted by most Western Europe countries, given that the country embraces the potential for growth, and understands the potential positive effects AI applications can have on the everyday life of the citizens, as well as the smooth execution of government functions.

In contrast to this, Italy came at odds with the rest of the Western-aligned countries after enacting a ban on ChatGPT, the most prominent language composition algorithm, citing violations of an EU legislation concerning digital privacy, the General Data Protection Regulation. The country subsequently lifted the ban, after the company developing the software reassured the government that no breaches will be recorded.

South Africa

Despite being one of the most economically and socially advanced countries on the African continent, South Africa is yet to draw a comprehensive plan on how to properly incorporate AI tools into its political and social environment. This is, in part, due to the country's immense economic disparities, which alienate the lower social classes from subjects related to AI regulation and development.

United States of America (USA)[11]

The United States has been a key player in the development of AI tools, and the country is taking steps to draw legislation towards their fair use. The US has traditionally been a pioneer when it comes to technological development, and they are the country with the largest amount of capital directed towards AI development

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[11] Figure 6: VB Staff. "Report: AI Investments See Largest Year-Over-Year Growth in 20 Years." VentureBeat, 6 Dec. 2021, https://venturebeat.com/ai/report-ai-investments-see-largest-year-over-year-growth-in-20-years/. Accessed 4 June 2023.
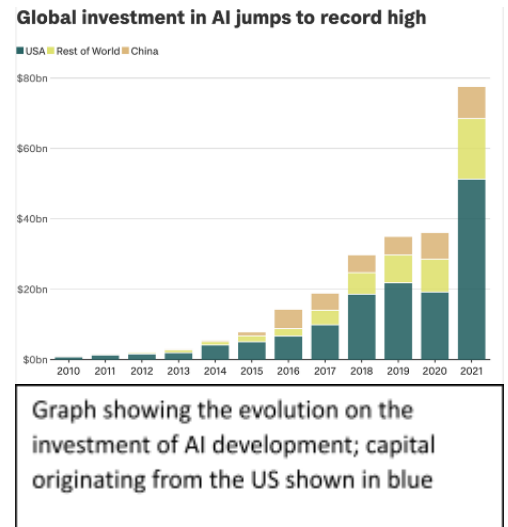
investment. As such, in the US prominent computing and artificial intelligence companies are headquartered.

In addition, the US has taken concrete steps towards the full legislation of AI development and the national government aims to provide a complete framework within which research on this subject is to be conducted.

The European Union

The European Union (EU) has taken some extensive measures to combat most problems posed by AI tools, especially when it comes to art concerns. The EU is preparing to enact legislation to limit disinformation and acknowledge copyright claims of artists behind AI images.

It is also proposed to force companies behind AI image generation software to mark the images they create, in order to make it easily understandable that they constitute AI products. In addition, the EU works alongside the US to come up with common guidelines concerning AI ethical use.

Global investment in AI jumps to record high
■USA ■Rest of World ■China

Graph showing the evolution on the investment of AI development; capital originating from the US shown in blue

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
15 February 1946	The first modern programmable computer is launched
5 January 2021	Dall-e, a pioneer AI image generation program, is commercially launched
20 September 2022	UN adoption of the Principles for the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in the United Nations System
30 November 2022	Dall-e's text generation counterpart, ChatGPT is launched by the same company, OpenAI
30 March 2023	Italy's national personal data protection agency bans ChatGPT
30 April 2023	After receiving reassurances about OpenAI's data handling policies, Italy lifts the ChatGPT ban

25 May 2023	An AI-generated image depicting an explosion in Washington is published, causing a temporary fall in the stock market

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

IMPACT OF RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND TARGETS, 73/17[12]

This resolution, adopted on November 26, 2018, refers to the correlation between rapid technological advancements and the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. While the notion of Artificial Intelligence is not mentioned in this document, it is acknowledged that the uncontrolled or unrestricted advancement of digital tools can cause more harm than good.

It is one of the earliest instances where the aim of technological devices is stated to be progress in the aspect of innovation and science, which can have everyday applications. This document functioned as the baseline for later treaties, resolutions and stances.

DRAFT TEXT OF THE RECOMMENDATION ON THE ETHICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE[13]

The treaty was drafted in June 2021, and adopted on November 25, 2021, by all UN Member States. This is the first treaty concerning the ethics of artificial intelligence to be adopted on a global level, adopted on November 25, 2021. It establishes basic guidelines about the appropriate and ethical development of AI tools, and it is a landmark concerning international cooperation in this field. The treaty covers the fields of education, science, culture and communication and information since the treaty's enforcement is to be aided by UNESCO, and these are the areas that fall under UNESCO's supervision

The treaty calls for the UN Member States to refrain from encouraging, supporting or otherwise permitting malicious AI activity in these sectors. On this note, it is suggested that any use posing a threat to individual privacy or dignity be avoided. At the same time, the facilitation of mass surveillance or promotion of gender or ethnic bias by AI tools is also denounced. The treaty aims to cement AI's position in the contemporary world as a means to improve governance, protect human rights and benefit humanity as a whole. In addition, the possible AI contribution to the mitigation of climate change and wealth disparity is expressed.

Principles for the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in the United Nations System[14]

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[12] ---. "ODS HOME PAGE." Documents-Dds-Ny.un.org, 3 Dec. 2018, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/403/98/PDF/N1840398.pdf?OpenElement.

[13] UNESCO "Draft Text of the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence." Unesco.org, 3 June 2021, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377897. Accessed 30 May 2023.

[14] United Nations, "Principles for the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in the United Nations System | United Nations - CEB." Unsceb.org, https://unsceb.org/principles-ethical-use-artificial-intelligence-united-nations-system . Accessed 30 May 2023.

Expanding on the question of ethical AI development, the United Nations embraced a set of pillars, reflecting the basis on which AI should be applied. These guidelines were set in September 2022. These are the fundamental targets that should be pursued with the advancement of AI, and they are, according to the UN, the following ones: "Not harm; defined purpose, necessity and proportionality; safety and security; fairness and non-discrimination; sustainability; right to privacy, data protection and data governance; human autonomy and oversight; transparency and explainability; responsibility and accountability; and inclusion and participation"

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Chinese AI copyright and text generation legislation

China has put in place a law prohibiting the use of paintings as a basis for further AI image generation without the explicit consent of the painting's intellectual rights holder, thus attempting to resolve the copyright issues associated with image AI generation. In addition, China has forbidden the propagation of inaccuracies through AI text generation tools. This measure is subject to criticism since it is considered a means through which China tries to curb the transmission of certain news and points of view that do not align with the government's stance.

European Union AI art regulation law

The European Union (EU) is currently drafting a plan aiming to increase the level of transparency concerning the development of AI tools. According to the upcoming regulations, programs which generate text or images with the help of publicly available source material will be forced to acknowledge the copyright holdings of the people who initially created this material. This is a way to help soothe the outrage expressed by artists who claim that their works are being exploited.

EU-US AI ethics common guidelines

The United States (US) and the European Union (EU) have recently agreed to come up with a draft outlining the main recommendations for the proper use of AI tools to enhance the well-being of democratic states. They have also called for other states with similar goals to participate in this initiative.

The draft denounces the surveillance aided by AI and aims to limit all risks that AI tools can present, to render them more trustworthy.

US AI regulation calls

Efforts to regulate AI tools in the United States have been growing stronger recently, despite the government's lukewarm response on the subject, due to the strong impact of technological development on the country's economy and status as an international AI hub. As such, the current plans envision the protection of personal data and identification of AI-generated images, similar to the ones drawn in the EU. These plans, however, have not been thoroughly expressed and no concrete path has been laid for their enforcement.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Coordination on an International Level

The question of AI ethics affects the entirety of humanity. The ethical codes on which AI tools are to operate must be universal, to identify their misuse and to minimize instances of abuse. As such, Member States must agree on the conditions for the appropriate application of AI tools.

This task requires immense international coordination within the framework of the United Nations. Since each Member State maintains a distinct point of view concerning this issue, all participants must make concessions to enable communication on this issue.

Drawing common rules by which every UN Member State will have to abide is a move that will only prove beneficial in the long-term, as this is the basis to ensure that no state agents will proceed to the unauthorized use of this technology, and it will enable greater cooperation on cross-border crime prevention and control. As such, this measure reinforces international security related to digital matters.

Denouncement of Privacy Violations

Viewing how AI face recognition software can be mishandled and employed to permit mass surveillance, there needs to be action in order to limit any such actions Tracking public activities with the help of AI is a worldwide phenomenon, but, in certain jurisdictions, the legislation allows for the data collected to be analyzed in inappropriate manners in order to fulfil immoral objectives, related to surveillance, unethical acquisition of personal data and general human rights violations.

Considering this to be one of the most adverse side effects of AI development, it is necessary to denounce this kind of activity, and to provide guarantees that surveillance and espionage do not get support from AI tools, since this would further derail the situation on these sensitive subjects.

Interdiction of certain practices related to AI tools

The UN Member States should be able to identify the potential uses of pieces of software and draw legislations defining which of them can be allowed, and which not. Grounds for interdiction of certain practices should cover not only threats towards national security but also a violation of the privacy of the users commanding AI, digital blackmailing and disrespect of basic human rights. On the other hand, outright prohibition of the development or utilization of AI software should be avoided, as this raises the question of freedom to access information.

The national governments themselves must abide by the regulation they draw, to ensure that they do not abuse technological advancements, while simultaneously regulating the general public's access to contemporary tools.

Promotion of social and political growth

Artificial Intelligence is a means to convey messages of a political or social character. Oftentimes though, these messages may be purposefully biased to advance a politician's or organization's goals. This can inhibit social growth, when, for example, artworks are plagiarized to feed AI algorithms and political advancement, when any party or politician representing extreme views cultivates a positive image of themselves through AI tools.

Actions like this harm society as a whole, and measures to control them are necessary. Political fairness can be achieved by regulating what kind of subjects can be promoted by AI tools, and setting off-limits the promotion of extremist political views. Social development can be facilitated by taking steps to decrease the promotion of gender or otherwise stereotypes and to prohibit the commercial use of pieces of art without their original creators' consent.

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