Most of Us Will Die in the AI Century, Not Because of It

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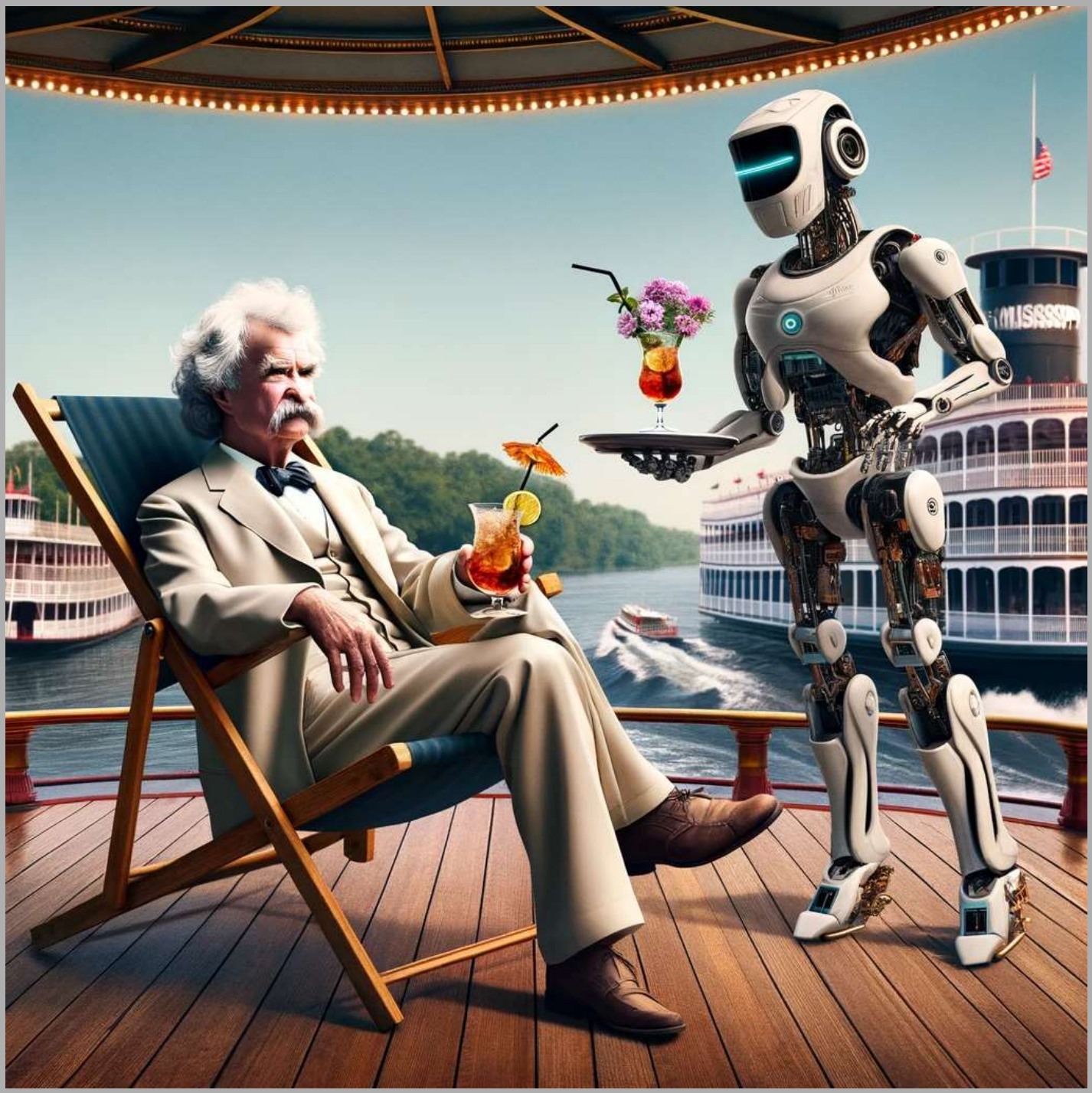

The Case for Effective, Proactive Government

AIQ® Performance Group

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-A Case for Effective, Proactive Government-

We should start with a confession by one of your authors that he is not a big fan of government. At the beginning of his freshman year in college, he was walking with a friend to inquire about joining the rowing team. (It was the day after he was told by a Freshman Football coach, "Kid, you have the speed of a man twice your size.") On their way they ran into the rugby coach who asked where they were going. When they told him, he smirked and said, "Good for you, mates. That's great preparation for a career in politics. Rowing and politics are the only two endeavors in life where you can succeed by sitting on your arse and going backwards." Neither of the boys impressed at crew or rugby, but your author's friend did serve two terms in the US Senate.

Topics

- **The Past and Future of AI Government Regulation**
- **Societal Benefits of AI vs. The Cost**
- **Government Regulation Priorities and Collaboration with Business**
- **The Risk of AI Machines vs. The Risk of Bad Actors Influenced by AI**
- **Why AGI is a Poor Way to Evaluate The Risks and Potential of AI**
- **Gaining Clarity and Alignment on the Greatest AI Risks**
- **Seven Things Government Can Do to Reduce AI Risks and Increase AI Value**
- **Conclusion: Building Trust Between Business and Government**

The Past and Future of AI Regulation

No one is going backward in the world of AI, so governments and businesses will need to step up their game. To get them rowing in the same direction will take great intention. A multitude of challenges and issues await an uncertain future. To make the point, let's imagine we are government officials charged with regulating that AI future. We are being asked to approve these three new AI innovations. Which of these three proposals would you approve?

1. **Proposal 1: AI Technology A** will improve human productivity in the world by 50 times within the next century, but it will come with a cost, and will most probably lead to the deaths of 1 million people a year.
2. **Proposal 2: AI Technology B** could drastically reduce our global dependence on fossil fuels by 90%, but it could risk the lives of thousands of people, and in the wrong hands could destroy our planet.

3. **Proposal 3: AI Technology C** could provide insights into curing cancer and other diseases that could prolong over 1 billion lives in the next 100 years but could also have unexpected consequences which could kill 10 million people in just 5 years.

When AIQ puts those questions to our audiences, almost everyone says that they wouldn't approve any of them. The irony is, these are not AI decisions, at all. They are decisions that our government made in the last 100 years, and all have been greenlighted.

Technology A is the automobile, B is nuclear energy, and C is gain-of-function research (if not Covid, the next lab leak is certainly possible in multiple labs around the globe). The benefits and costs of these technologies can be debated by historians, and one could argue that the benefits have outweighed the risks. That said, governments could use the lessons of the past to inform their oversite and regulation around AI in the future.

When we talk about new technologies, like AI, we tend to think about the negatives…machines taking our jobs and robots ruling our world. However, when it comes to the adverse effects of powerful technologies, incompetence or misguided hubris are much more likely to create tragedies or disasters. In the examples above, that could be drunk drivers, mismanagement of nuclear power, or scientists who conduct ill-advised experiments on viruses. These are not people with bad intentions. Unfortunately, as comedian Ron White so famously lamented, "You can't fix stupid."

Sometimes it takes the government time to "fix stupid." Seat belts took 50 years, airbags 20 more. There were nuclear scares (and occasional fatalities) at Three Miles Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima. And of course there was Covid-19. (Regardless of your politics, gain of function research safety could use a rethink.)

AI Benefits vs. The Cost

This article dispels the myth that AI will cause our demise. That premise may generate clicks, but it obscures countless AI upsides. AI will enhance our lives in ways that far outweigh the negatives. Diseases will be cured, pollution will be reduced, creativity and productivity will explode, every type of entertainment from movies to music to video games will be more compelling, unstructured data will be turned into information, and decision making in business, government, and even our personal lives will be far more informed. And while there may be a rough transition period, people doing menial jobs, executing repetitive tasks or conducting clerical research will find more interesting and rewarding job opportunities being created. Overall, life on earth should improve for all. At least that opportunity exists. The challenge for government is to encourage these developments, while minimizing downside risks, especially societal catastrophe.

Government Regulation Priorities and Collaboration with Business

The world is looking to the United States to lead AI development and its safe use. However, as Winston Churchill once lamented, "America will always do the right thing, once they have exhausted all other options".[1] For recent proof to that effect, look no further than social media. As teenagers in the US are experiencing unprecedented levels of anxiety, depression, and suicide. Groups like The Institute for Humane Technology have made a strong case that large Social Media[2] companies fanned those flames by cleverly addicting teens to small dopamine hits from on-line content, increasing the amount of time teens (and others) spend on social media through their phones, a phenomenon they call the "race to the bottom of the brain stem."[2] Belatedly, governments are now trying to put the toothpaste back in the tube, setting age limits on cell phones and forcing Tik Tok's sale.

There are hard lessons we are learning. Much of Silicon Valley has adopted Mark Zuckerberg's, and Facebook's, philosophy of "move fast, and break things," and they have often succeeded in outpacing the regulators. Uber, Lyft, Airbnb, and VRBO all circumvented local government regulations in a bid to become "too popular to fail". (Or in Tik Tok's case, "too popular to ban".) Many would argue that that swashbuckling mentality made society better overall. However, that same mentality resulted in multiple social media companies blindly obsessing over user clicks, while ignoring the warning signs that they were addicting an entire generation, leading to enormous social isolation. In 2021, when the Surgeon General came out with a warning of the ill effects of social media, those social media companies started to sound a lot like tobacco companies in the 1960's, or the Oxycontin producers of the 2000's.[3] "It's not that a cigarette is unsafe. It's not that painkillers are unsafe. The problem is the people that abuse them." Of course, if teenagers were getting on social media for 30 minutes a day to "keep in touch with friends," we wouldn't have the problems we see now.

What does this have to do with regulating AI? Well, there are some parallels. While social media was breeding anxiety and depression in an entire generation, government was consumed with regulating hate speech, or Russian election interference, or the splintering of media outlets and "fake news". Today, prevailing AI concerns expressed by congress revolve around whether AI will produce fair loan and credit scores that don't conform to equity criteria, or whether AI is addressing issues of inclusion in their HR algorithms. Without question, these are important issues, but do they present the greatest AI risks?.

1. https://winstonchurchill.hillsdale.edu/americans-will-always-right-thing/
2. https://medium.com/@joseph.ec.heath/winning-the-arms-race-to-the-bottom-of-the-brainstem-5b98524a7c8f
3. (https://www.theatlantic.com/podcasts/archive/2023/06/stop-comparing-social-media-to-big-tobacco/674267/)

More importantly, what are the AI risks that should be at the forefront of the quest to regulate AI in governments, businesses, and academia?

Gaining Clarity and Alignment on the Greatest AI Risks

Why regulate at all? The large tech companies are assuredly claiming they can be trusted, and they seem to be saying all the right things, almost in unison. "We need to be regulated. We welcome government oversight. We are committed to transparency". However, in the last few days of May 2024, multiple revelations appeared in the media about large AI firms threatening whistleblowers, misleading their boards, illegally scraping proprietary content, and packing "independent AI safety committees" with the same executives that they are supposed to be regulating.[4]

If the people assigned to oversee AI risks are being undermined, and the people who understand the intimate details of AI risks are being silenced, one could argue that the risks are not clearly understood by key stakeholders, especially governments.

The Risk of AI Machines vs. The Risk of Bad Actors Influenced by AI

One thing is clear. AI alone is not the greatest risk. Fundamentally, AI lacks its own motives. It does not desire or intend anything independently. These systems can be unplugged, altered, or deactivated by their human operators (a fact that is unlikely to change soon). The existential threat emerges, not from the machines themselves, but from those who control them (or bad actors who can use AI to control others). The Center for Humane Technology argues that AI takes the ills of social media one step further, through its ability to influence people's thoughts and actions. The race is no longer to the bottom of the brain stem. It is a race to the "center of the cortex", the area that drives thought, beliefs, and behaviors. Humans, once influenced or radicalized, simply cannot be "switched off" or restrained.[5] Those AI tools, when combined with real world influences can be leveraged to recruit suicide bombers, ISIS fighters, or spawn mass disruption. Humans under this influence may be far more dangerous than a machine that can be "unplugged." People influenced by nefarious actors through AI remain free agents, protected by human rights laws, capable of independent actions, and far less visible or controllable in society. While these threats are unlikely to lead to the demise of human civilization, they are real and far more existential than credit scores and election meddling, something governments would be wise to consider.

Why AGI is a Poor Way to Evaluate The Risks and Potential of AI

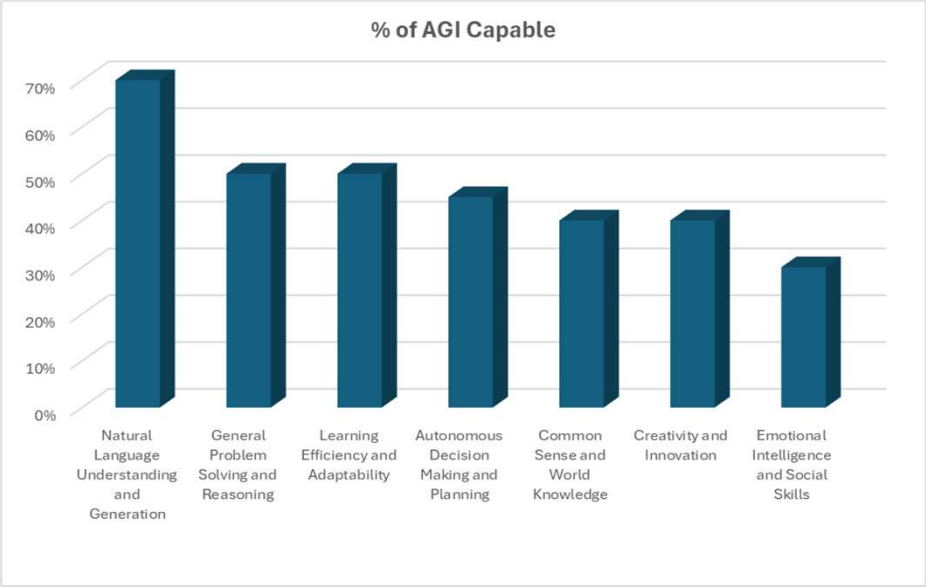
Will AGI ("Artificial General Intelligence", loosely defined as machines achieving parity with humans in terms of capabilities) be arriving soon, and is that the point where humans begin to lose control?

The answer is NO and NO. As the chart on the next page illustrates, AI has a long way to go to match some aspects of human intelligence. That said, AGI is probably a poor barometer of the overall AI risk. Even if AI never reaches some aspects of human intelligence, that doesn't necessarily mean it is less powerful, as AI far exceeds humans in other aspects of intelligence. (Older readers may remember the character Dr. Spock, the Vulcan from the Star Trek franchise, who had no sense of humor, irony, or wit; but he could read minds and had powers of telepathy. If you watched the show, you felt pretty good about the fact that he was on the side of The Federation and humans from Planet Earth.) Governments should look to regulate specific areas of AI that pose the most risk and spend less time in areas where there may be some societal downside, but whose negative outcomes can be more easily managed.

4 ttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECoaXQ-9ehA

5 https://act.humanetech.com/the_ai_dilemma_second_contact

Common Forms of AI and Their Capabilities vs. Humans[6]



Seven Things Government Can Do to Reduce AI Risks and Increase AI Value

Government is in a tough spot. Regulating and overseeing the AI industry is an extremely complex task. How do you regulate and oversee technologies which have yet to be invented? The task requires knowledge of the current capabilities and proactive and adaptive measures to anticipate future developments. Here are 7 levers we believe governments should consider for regulating and overseeing the AI industry effectively:

Government Regulation (Options)	Potential Implementation Framework (Examples)
Comprehensive Liability Regime	**Strict Liability:** Implement strict liability for AI developers, companies & contractors. Make reasonable anticipation of future harm grounds for culpability. This would include financial penalties and, in severe cases, criminal liability. **Insurance Requirements:** Mandate AI companies to carry sufficient insurance to cover potential damages resulting from their technologies.
Regulatory Approval and Oversight	**Approval Process**: Establish a regulatory body like the FDA for AI, requiring new AI technologies to undergo a rigorous approval process before being released to the market. **Continuous Monitoring:** Implement ongoing monitoring and evaluation of AI systems post-deployment to ensure compliance with safety and ethical standards.
Access Restrictions	**Age and Usage Restrictions:** Limit access to certain AI applications for minors and sensitive populations to prevent misuse and ensure user safety. **Credentialing and Licensing:** Require users and developers of advanced AI systems to obtain proper credentials and licenses, ensuring they have the necessary expertise and understanding of ethical implications.
Ethical and Safety Standards	**Mandatory Audits:** Require regular third-party audits of AI systems to ensure they meet predefined ethical and safety standards. **Transparency and Explainability:** Enforce transparency in AI algorithms and decision-making processes, making it mandatory for companies to explain how their AI systems work and the rationale behind their decisions.
Data Privacy and Security	**Data Protection Regulations:** Implement strict data protection laws specifically for AI, ensuring that user data is collected, stored, and processed securely and ethically. **Breach Notification:** Require immediate reporting of data breaches and AI-related incidents to the relevant authorities and affected individuals.
Research & Development Oversight	**Funding and Support:** Provide funding and support for research into the ethical and safe development of AI, promoting innovation while ensuring safety. **Collaboration with Academia:** Foster collaboration between government, industry, and academic institutions to stay ahead of AI advancements and address emerging challenges.
Public and Industry Engagement	**Stakeholder Involvement:** Involve various stakeholders, including the public, in the regulatory process to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered. **Educational Initiatives:** Promote AI literacy and education to help the public understand AI technologies and their implications

6. AIQ Research

The list above is by no means exhaustive, and it is certainly not a final list of recommendations. It is a framework for discussion. Take the "Comprehensive Liability Regime", as an example: Critics complain that open-source AI, like Meta's Llama, gives "bad actors" the keys to the kingdom, since with any code, providing open-source AI safeguards could easily be removed or altered. Meta says there are safeguards, and the issue is so complex that we could debate it for years, but if Mark Zuckerberg knew that his entire $500+ billion net worth was at risk if he was wrong, might that change his behavior?

As for Regulatory approval, one could argue there are few examples where government and private enterprises are working efficiently. The FDA takes 7-14 years (a lifetime in AI years) to approve a drug, and even so, almost 5% of those approved are eventually withdrawn from the market. That number goes to 25% of drugs that received accelerated approval like the Covid vacines.[7] The Highway Safety Commission, who was incredibly inept and influenced by big corporations when it came to seat belts, has a better track record when it comes to self-driving vehicles which may prove a good test bed for future regulation.

Government might also learn lessons from their lethargic approach to restricting children's access to content on their phones. Most parents are not even aware of some of the tools available to them to control what their children can view, and the tools to execute those restrictions are not easy to use or even find on these phones. [8]

Beyond rules alone, some regulators, like ISACA (Information Systems Audit and Control Association) have gone so far as to recommend an AI audit process, a proposal whose benefit are being debated. However, it is not unprecedented.[8] Each year every public company in America must submit to an accounting and tax audit to certify their financials. Perhaps the Tax and Audit Accounting Firms could work on simplifying the tax code (something that many argue they are incentivized to keep

7. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_withdrawn_drugs

8 https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/research/research-tracker-awareness-usage-parental-controls

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complicated, but a sentiment that may change if AI can perform much of that work), and redirect those resources to ensure proper use and development of AI software?

Conclusion: Building Trust Between Business and Government

There are too many issues to cover here. Copywrite, intellectual property, privacy, and security, to name a few. It is imperative that government regulators remember that the history of open and honest transparency has been "mixed", and the AI industry is not off to a great start with that. The laws around copyrights and user data (in a world where data is THE competitive advantage) are murky and poorly enforced. As mentioned above, in a race to the bottom of our cortexes, and our product loyalty, many companies appear to be inclined to ask for forgiveness tomorrow versus permission today. More laws around liability (Point 1 above) could slow that down.

Both governments and large AI firms are saying the right things, but their actions bely their commitment. To paraphrase the Greek philosopher Eremos, "The Lord gave us one mouth and two feet, so if you want to understand someone's true intentions, watch the feet."

The form and content of a public AI dialogue will evolve over time, but it will be important to set up the infrastructure in advance, so that AI issues can be dealt with expeditiously as they arise. President Biden's recently appointed task force on AI regulation is a good first step. Let's hope they are doing much of what we suggest here.

The challenge ahead is to ensure that AI is used to uplift rather than undermine, to clarify rather than confuse, and to unite rather than divide. The immediate focus of regulation must be on creating a framework that promotes the ethical use of AI and protects our collective psyche and democratic institutions from being undermined by the very technologies meant to enhance our lives. We can only hope that the past is prologue when it comes to governments preventing global AI catastrophe, as they were with historically threatening technologies. However, the pace of AI development and the breadth of its impact on society means that we don't have the luxury of "exploring all other options before doing the right thing". There is much work to be done, but whatever your point of view, take heart! There is far more upside than downside.

It is unclear what the AI future holds, but most of the human race will likely have lives that are easier, longer, and more rewarding. There will be fewer diseases, chronic illnesses, and tragic deaths. Hence:

If Most of Us **don't** die in the AI Century, there is a good chance it will be **because** of AI.

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9 https://www.isaca.org/resources/isaca-journal/issues/2024/volume-2/a-proposed-high-level-approach-to-ai-audit