

The AI debate

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What role should the state have in AI?

Current UK government is pro- developing AI capability in the UK, and pro-innovation – but needs long term planning and investment

National AI strategy (2021) – fronted by Kwasi Kwarteng and Nadine Dorries – themes of investing in AI ecosystem, governance, and spread of benefits

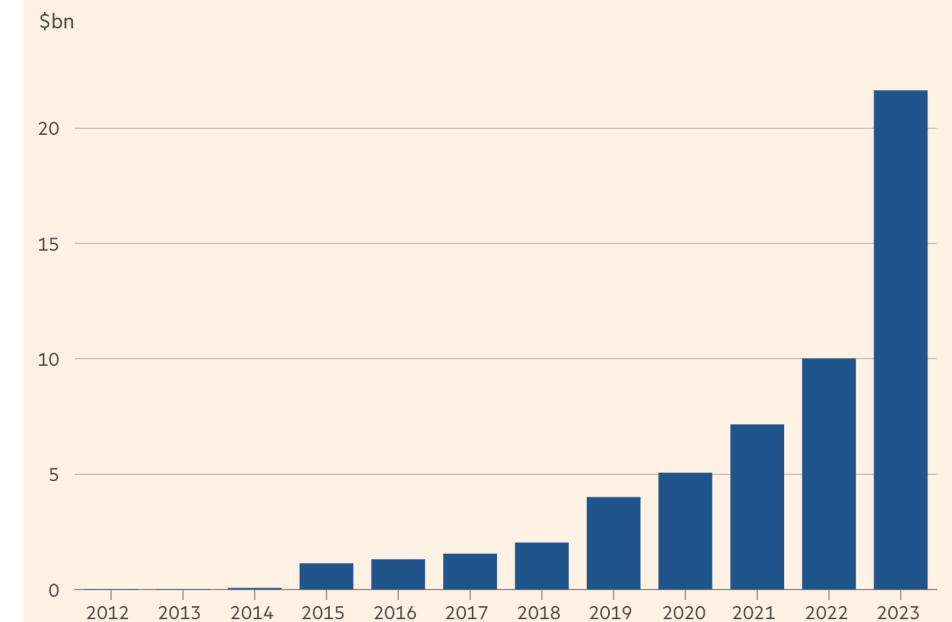
Feb 23 – Tony Blair and William Hague call on government to put science and technology at the core of a new “strategic state” – including building foundational AI infrastructure

March 2023:

- Science and technology framework identifies AI as one of five “critical technologies”
- Independent future of compute review identifies lag in public investment in AI compute and calls for investment in capacity for AI research
- Government publishes white paper on “pro-innovation” regulation of AI

AND – an open letter including Turing prizewinners, tech founders and professors, calls on AI labs to pause for six months the training of systems more powerful than GPT-4

AGI companies* have received more than \$21bn in investment, including \$11bn in the first three months of 2023



Research: Ian Hogarth

*Aleph Alpha, Anthropic, Adept, Cohere, DeepMind (Google), Inflection, Keen Technologies, OpenAI,

Source: FT, 13 April, 2023

“*Should* we let machines flood our information channels with propaganda and untruth? *Should* we automate away all the jobs, including the fulfilling ones? *Should* we develop nonhuman minds that might eventually outnumber, outsmart, obsolete and replace us? *Should* we risk loss of control of our civilization? Such decisions must not be delegated to unelected tech leaders.”

Overview of debates

How game changing is it really? “Narrow” AI is impressive but confined to well-defined tasks, whereas “artificial general intelligence” (AGI) that can assess novel situations, infer, and respond still seems a way off (anywhere between one and 200 years)

The problem of alignment – if human-like AGI is a realistic prospect, how can it/should it be controlled? The disparity between investment in capability and that in alignment.

Limitations: bias in the source data, hallucination of plausible but false information

The impact on the labour market – less “robots taking jobs” than “robots taking on some tasks” - the evolution of roles

Weaponisation of AI – its use in warfare

The spread of misinformation – vaccine misinformation, climate change denial, deepfakes

Some public policy challenges: the skills and capacity to adopt in business and the public sector (growing the customer base); recruiting or importing talent to the UK; the availability and interconnectedness of large datasets; finance for innovation

Public attitudes, hype, and drawing useful conclusions about what to do



In reality, as far as we know, the Pope has never worn a puffer jacket

Thank you

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