

Letter

Letter: Sensible AI regulation will amplify human potential

From Don Schuerman, Chief Technology Officer, Pegasystems, Cambridge MA, US

The US government's public commitment to AI governance, as outlined by US secretary of state Antony Blinken and secretary of commerce Gina Raimondo (Opinion, July 25), is without a doubt a positive step forward as a general approach to the technology.

Greater public awareness and debate around ethical use of AI is a net good, and will ensure it becomes a positive force in society. Both the public and AI tech firms will benefit from increased governance that builds a shared understanding of longer-term AI risks and how to limit them.

This is especially resonant at a time when businesses are shifting more decision-making to AI-driven automated systems, especially at the micro-level of key business processes. Automated AI is prevalent in loan approvals, fraud detection and personalised marketing

offers, but businesses have now begun to use these across any process that could benefit from working smarter, not just more efficiently.

We're also increasingly moving towards the age of the "autonomous enterprise", where organisations comprehensively apply AI and automation to customer engagement, servicing and operations to operationalise agility and create self-optimising businesses. Increased levels of AI-powered business automation will have implications for how societies view AI. Our research revealed that many consumers believe AI is capable of evolving itself to behave amorally.

At the same time, there are downsides to significant worry about future existential risk, as it can distract from dealing with current opportunities, harms and limitations of the AI systems already in

widespread use. While concerns have been raised around the rapid evolution of generative AI, such as GPT-4, there have concurrently been significant developments in trustworthy use of AI, at both regulatory and technical levels. Examples include methods to detect and remove bias in automated decisions or provide transparency and explanations for predictions or content, such as with answers generated by AI.

Regardless of regulation, there is no long-term sustainable future for irresponsible use of AI, and sensible AI regulation will reward and foster innovation of trustworthy AI that benefits both consumers and companies alike. The key lies in shifting the mindset of how people think about AI — focusing less on AI replacing humans, and viewing it as more of an amplifier of human potential.