

Keep AI's Future Open



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Rapid evolution of AI offers a unique chance to meld cultures, ideas and knowledge into a unified canvas of innovation. With AI poised to inject \$15.7 tn into the global economy, its role extends beyond mere economic growth to being a pivotal force of societal transformation. This potential has captured the focus of policymakers worldwide, as we witness several national laws, multilateral guidance and global summits to ensure effective regulatory oversight.

However, the pace of AI innovation will surpass the speed at which new regulations can be developed. While regulatory frameworks are indispensable, they are not sufficient to navigate advancements and complex dynamics of the AI sector. A broader, more inclusive approach to governance that transcends conventional regulatory strategies is essential.

This approach demands the cultivation of an AI ecosystem rooted in openness and transparency, a fertile ground where deliberation, diversity and even dissent are not just welcomed but are incentivised pathways towards achieving consensus on ethical and responsible AI training, development and deployment.

The global AI community should support and promote the open-source movement. By fostering a dynamic open-source ecosystem that welcomes auditing, adaptation and use, we can create a transparent foundation that benefits technological advancement. There are learnings from India's digital public infrastructure (DPI), which is open source, open API and globally interoperable.

► **No monopoly games** It acts as a great equaliser in the marketplace by democratising access to AI technologies. It guards against monopolisation, ensuring that the interests of a select few corporations or countries do not shape the future of AI. Over 93% of developers

worldwide adapt and integrate open-source code into their projects. An open ecosystem minimises the time and resources necessary to create new applications, democratising access to tools across a broader spectrum of developers.

A 2024 Harvard Business School study, 'The Value of Open Source Software', reveals that the open-source ecosystem considerably lowers software costs for organisations, reducing expenses by up to 3.5 times. Also, open-source ecosystem's supply-side value is estimated at \$4.15 bn, while its demand-side value is about \$8.8 tn.

► **Cross-pollination** A vibrant open-source AI ecosystem can foster interdisciplinary strategy in AI R&D and implementation, essential for harnessing its potential and building public confidence. Furthermore, a multidisciplinary method will ensure a discourse of ethical, environmental and social elements throughout the AI lifecycle, from ideation to deployment, mitigating many contemporary concerns.

► **More the merrier** For AI to benefit and represent everyone, there must be widespread community involvement in AI development. This level of engagement is beyond the reach of exclusive, proprietary models. Instead, it calls for a thriving open-source ecosystem that fosters diversity and inclusivity, ensuring AI technologies are shaped by a multitude of perspectives and experiences.

► **Transparency triumphs** To combat bias and discrimination in AI, promoting transparency in algorithms is crucial. For instance, Stanford's 2022 AI Index Report underscored that while LLMs have become sophisticated, they also tend to replicate and amplify biases and toxicity from their training data,



Keep a blank slate

reinforcing societal prejudices and power imbalances. The open-source ecosystem can be instrumental in offering a collaborative space for examination and enhancement, ensuring AI evolves as a force for equity, fairness and alignment with societal values.

► **Safety valve** Openness plays a crucial role in bolstering AI safety. It adheres to principles of auditability and accountability, ensuring AI's reliability is rigorously maintained. Allowing for external scrutiny enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of AI models. An open-source ecosystem can provide a much-needed dialogue on audit practices, safety protocols and verification methods, enriching the AI landscape.

► **Real-time data** AI ecosystem can significantly enhance regulatory processes by providing real-time data. Its inherent transparency enables ongoing monitoring and evaluation of AI technologies, ensuring regulators remain informed about the latest developments and challenges.

Narendra Modi recently approved the IndiaAI mission, with ₹10,371.92 cr. With objectives of democratising computing access, enhancing data quality, nurturing homegrown AI expertise, drawing top-tier AI professionals, fostering industry partnerships, offering financial support to startups, focusing on socially beneficial AI projects and promoting ethical AI practices, the mission's blueprint resonates deeply with the open-source philosophy. This strategic alignment will boost India's journey towards becoming an AI powerhouse.

As AI capabilities advance, it will increasingly be intertwined with diverse societal frameworks and functions. Given the swift pace of AI deployment and commercialisation, it's crucial for global stakeholders in AI development to commit to ethical practices that uphold accountability, explainability, fairness and transparency.

Embracing the open-source ecosystem in AI is critical for this. It will ensure a future where tech is developed with a foundation of humane values, ensuring the benefits from AI are shared widely and equitably.

The writer is India's G20 sherpa