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Dario Amodei's slowdown proposal is becoming an operating model: embedded evaluators, development-time safety cases and cross-lab standards. The unresolved contest is over whether that oversight belongs to companies, governments, independent evaluators or a more distributed/open ecosystem.

The shift

"Pacing" gets an operating model

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei is defining "pacing" as a constraint on the rate of capability growth, not a moratorium: progress continues, but safeguards, understanding and control must keep up, and every released model must be properly tested. His three-part plan calls for embedded third-party evaluators, coordination among frontier companies in democratic countries, and global coordination where possible. [1, 2]

The evaluator proposal is unusually concrete. Frontier labs would give external teams ongoing, employee-like access to completed models as well as training pipelines and processes; Anthropic says reviewers should have desks, badges, laptops, near-internal tools and permissions, live access to relevant employees, and the right to publish key findings without company editorial control, subject to narrow redactions. [2] The practical change is to make safety an inspectable development process rather than only a release-time promise.

OpenAI is moving the safety case into development. Sam Altman says OpenAI now formulates explicit safety cases before frontier reinforcement-learning runs expected to increase capability significantly, alongside its pre-release work; he also calls for shared standards on misalignment, monitoring and safety, and says

"pacing" means slower progress, not stopping. [3] Elon Musk separately backed a competitor-review mechanism whose proposed form is regular cross-company calls and one to two weeks of early access before release, with government intervention reserved for cases where a company refuses to reduce a serious danger. [4, 5]

The proposal is also industrial and geopolitical policy. Amodei ties democratic pacing to preserving the U.S. lead, proposing tighter controls on advanced chips and semiconductor equipment, action against unauthorized distillation, and stronger protection against model-weight theft. His global ladder starts with agreements against AI-enabled biological weapons and pre-release acute-risk testing, then moves toward a difficult, verifiable speed limit on recursive self-improvement; he considers a broad pause unlikely in the near term. [2]

The authority question is still open

Amodei's governance answer is joint oversight by democratically elected governments: he says a single government could abuse advanced AI just as a single company could. Satya Nadella's version is more distributed—closed and open-source models should coexist, enterprises should retain control of their knowledge and model weights, and evaluator and governance mechanisms should not be controlled by a handful of entities; Microsoft says it will publish a Code of Conduct for its first-party models for public consultation. [6, 7]

François Chollet makes concentration itself a central frontier risk and argues that avoiding it requires multiple independent providers, including open-source options. Gary Marcus agrees that evaluation should be distributed: METR should have a voice, but not carry the "weight of the world," and scientists outside the Bay Area and effective-altruist orbit should be involved. [8, 9, 10]

The counterpressure is geopolitical and legal. Vinod Khosla supports oversight but rejects slowdowns that could let the U.S. fall behind China, saying advanced AI in Chinese hands is more dangerous than advanced AI generally. Lina Khan argues that existing consumer-protection and competition laws already reach unvetted or defective AI products and that concentrated cross-investments can undermine accountability, so enforcement need not wait for a new AI-specific regime. [11, 12, 13]

The unresolved issue is therefore not simply whether frontier AI needs safeguards. It is whether those safeguards should be enforced through voluntary peer review, embedded independent evaluators, government-backed rules, or a more competitive and distributed model ecosystem—and how any of those arrangements can operate without sacrificing security or allowing one institution to control the frontier.

Sources

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